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J. S. Spencer

DISCOURSES

ON

SACRAMENTAL OCCASIONS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "A PASTOR'S SKETCHES," "SERMONS, PRACTICAL," "SERMONS, DOCTRINAL."

With an Introduction,

BY

GARDINER SPRING, D.D.

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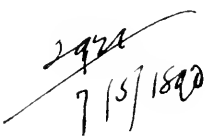

INTRODUCTION.

THE productions, already in print, from the pen of the late Dr. SPENCER, are a sufficient earnest of the value of the present volume. All who knew and loved him, will readily recognize him in this hallowed dress. They will remember how he spake, and prayed, and felt; and, if we mistake not, they will be delightful memories. It was the cherished wish of Dr. SPENCER to prepare for the press a volume of Sacramental Discourses.

His character as a Preacher and as a Pastor was an uncommon union of qualities;—vigorous in his thoughts, tender in his emotions, faithful and courageous in his exhibition of God's truth, and combining poetic beauty with reasoning powers of a high order. The old Christian and the young Christian, as well as those who seek the best preparatives for coming to the Table of their

Divine Lord for the first time, will be instructed and comforted by these Sacramental Discourses. With such a volume in their hands, they will be furnished with more than the rudiments of Christianity.

GARDINER SPRING,

BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL.

February 29, 1861.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION 8

I.

DESIRE TO EAT THE PASSOVER 9

II.

MEANING AND DESIGN OF THE SACRAMENT 28

III.

CHRIST PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS 42

IV

WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME? 55

V.

THE SACRAMENT A FEAST OF ALLIANCE 73

VI.

THE LORD'S SUPPER A COVENANT 89

VII.

WHY WEEPEST THOU? 110

VIII.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER 125

IX.

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD! 143

X.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST..... 159

XI.

CHRIST WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS..... 178

XII.

BELIEVERS STABLISHED IN CHRIST..... 197

XIII.

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU COMFORTLESS..... 220

XIV.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US..... 236

XV.

OUGHT NOT CHRIST TO HAVE SUFFERED ?..... 255

XVI.

CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED..... 274

XVII.

HE LOVED THEM TO THE END..... 295

XVIII.

WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US..... 312

XIX.

IT BEHOOVED HIM..... 329

XX.

CRUCIFIXION TO THE WORLD BY THE CROSS..... 350

XXI.

FAITH WITHOUT SIGHT..... 367

XXII.

THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION FIT FOR FAITH..... 384

XXIII.

CHRIST MADE PERFECT BY SUFFERING..... 402

XXIV.

CHRIST MADE UNDER THE LAW TO REDEEM..... 420

XXV.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE BY BELIEVING..... 437

XXVI.

JESUS CHRIST'S PARTING ADDRESS..... 454

I.

Desire to Eat the Passover.

'And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."—Luke xxii. 15.

THE time in which Jesus Christ would celebrate the Passover for the last time, was come. He was seated at the table with his disciples. All things having been found in readiness for his reception, the appointed preparation having been made, he met his disciples for the last time before he suffered.

There is something deeply affecting in meeting for the last time those we love. When we are called to the death-bed of our friends, to hold our last intercourse with them before they die; when we listen to the trembling accents of their voice, and catch the last thoughts of their expiring hour; when we receive their parting blessing, and hear that thrilling word, *Farewell forever*,—there is something in the scene that *will* find its way to the heart. We are compelled to feel that such a scene is indeed deeply affecting.

Our friend is torn away from the kindness of our love, and the offices of our affection. A kind of solemn violence is done to the half-hallowed feelings of our attachment. Instances of intended kindness are forbidden. Our friend is beyond the reach of our affection.

Thoughts of former neglect are awakened, and associated with the bitter feeling that now he is beyond the sphere of our repentance, and is no more to be affected by our friendship or our hatred.

And how solemn, as well as affecting, is such a scene! Standing by our dying friend, we are in converse with a soul that will, in a few moments, be in eternity. We exchange salutations with one who will soon mingle with kindred souls in the world of spirits. This moment our friend is in communion with us; the next, perhaps, in communion with God. He may even carry to his God the very thoughts that we have suggested as we held his dying hand, and we thus send onward a message to our future home.

Is it not an awfully solemn thing thus to be in open communication with the world of spirits—thus to fit out a soul with the thoughts that it shall carry up to God? And can we resist the reflection that the last words of the dying are more than usually important? Has not our soul been thrilled by them, as if they were indeed the voice of eternity? There is so much of the solemn and impressive in the article of death, that we are used to give more than usual credence to the declarations of the dying. We feel so much the awfulness of the scene, that we are not quick to believe *any* one so senseless as to trifle in his dying hour, and dare to rush into the presence of his Judge with a lie upon his lip. And this is no monition of superstitious folly. There is something in the nature of the case which forces us to this opinion, and in all ages the words of the dying have commanded more than common credence. It is *nature* that yields this tribute, and it may be questioned whether one of our common nature lives who *can* refuse it.

We can find no motives for the insincerity of the dying. The world has lost its value, and appears in its own littleness. And though cases *may* exist where the fact is different, yet usually we can not but believe the whole world insufficient to bribe those who know that the time of their death is at hand. That is an hour when man is honest. The mask of the hypocrite falls off when death has come, the lip of falsehood is made vocal with truth, and the sincerity of that hour is evidenced by the condemnation of every other hour of life. With death in prospect, no man trifles. He will trifle all his life,—spend every day in folly, or dissipation, or debauchery, or idleness; but when the day of death has come, and he believes it, he will *not* trifle. The thoughts which occupy him will be thoughts of importance. The business which engages him will be business of importance. If he has any thing more to do he will then be doing it, and neither falsehood of heart nor folly of mind will turn him aside.

And should you find *any* man occupied, just before he knew he was to die, in *any* business, you would not hesitate to believe that he regarded it as business of importance; and especially if you hear him associating together his present occupation and his approaching end, you will think that occupation the great object of his interest.

Such was the situation of Jesus Christ when he sat down to eat the passover for the last time with his disciples. That was an occasion of no small moment. Even Jesus Christ felt the full weight of its importance, and had long been contemplating its arrival. He had before announced that his time was at hand, and the expression with which he introduces the conversation of

the Paschal supper manifests how much the occasion dwelt upon his mind. *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*

With desire I have desired. This is a style of expression familiar to the Hebrews, to express the intensity of the thought. *With desire I have desired;* i. e., I have greatly desired, strongly desired; it has been long upon my heart as one of my important acts, to be accomplished before I suffer. The instances of the same method of expression are common: *in multiplying I will multiply thee;* i. e., I will greatly multiply thee: *in blessing I will bless thee;* i. e., I will greatly bless thee. It is a phraseology expressive of very much emphasis, and, from its adoption in this place, we are made acquainted with the intense feelings with which Christ came to this Paschal supper.

The celebration of this supper is associated immediately with his death. The next day he died; and with that death in full view, he sat down with his disciples, expressing at once his knowledge of its approach and his desire for that occasion. But why? What was there in the feast of the passover that made Jesus Christ so eagerly desire its celebration, in the face of his approaching death? Why was this thing so important, that it should command the zeal of the Son of God the day before he died?

We cannot find an answer to this question in the strictness with which Christ observed the institutions of the economy of the Jews. However much he respected the institutions which he had formerly made with them, (when he was God, before he was made flesh,) and which he always honored, it was not on account of that respect that he so greatly desired to eat this passover.

He desired it because,

I. This was the end of the Jewish economy; and

II. The introduction of the Christian dispensation, and the establishment of the Christian sacrament in the new testament of his blood.

III. In this he testified his affection for his disciples, and left to all future believers an example of what they might expect to find in communion at his Table.

IV. It was his preparation for death.

These four items will occupy our attention this morning.

I. This was the end of the Jewish economy.

The design of Christ's mission to the world was the salvation of man, and thereby the glory of God. He came to *seek and to save that which was lost*, and he always kept the object of his mission in view. The whole design of his wisdom and his goodness was not at once revealed, even to his chosen disciples, but left to be unfolded by degrees, as time and circumstances rendered proper. The world was to be prepared for the full consummation of the great object, and the full announcement of the wonderful truth. Even when he had appeared on earth, the design of the Jewish system was not at once understood. The veil of mystery was still flung around it, and the eye, even of the disciple, could not penetrate its folds. But the purpose of Christ was fixed; the object of his mission was before him; the glory of the Father and the salvation of man were not forgotten. When his hour was at hand, it found him giving the last instructions to his followers, and preparing for that final catastrophe which should cover the heavens with blackness, and fill the earth with trembling.

He met his disciples as a Jew. As a Jew, he honored the institutions of his nation. But those institutions were now to crumble at the touch of his divinity. Hallowed for centuries, and revered alike as the monuments of antiquity and the ordinances of heaven, they held over the heart and mind of the Hebrew an almost unlimited control. The shades of his fathers seemed to encircle them. The sacredness of the Godhead was flung around them. But the fulness of time was come; and Jesus, disrobed indeed of the splendor but gifted with the plenitude of omnipotence, was now to sweep aside those institutions which commanded so powerfully the Hebrew mind, and spoke so effectually to the Hebrew heart, associated as they were with all the economy of life, and intermingled with the recollections of Horeb and Sinai.

Such institutions have often made the triumphant conqueror tremble, when the people who revered them were prostrate at his feet. The awful energies of their desperation have been feared, if the ruthless hand of power, though grasping the sceptre of victory, should dare to touch the fireside customs of their fathers and destroy their sacredness, or rifle the temple and take away its gods. There is a kind of moral omnipotence in the desperation of a people, when goaded on to desperation, though overcome by power. And even the conquering Roman, in the fulness of his might, and borne on in the pride of his victory, never dared to lay his hand on the *religion* of the vanquished. He respected the established customs of the conquered; and while he subdued the worshippers, he bowed before their gods. Sensible that there was a point beyond which human nature would not yield, his sagacity found that point

in the article of religion; and, while he tore away political regulations, without mercy and without remorse, he dared not interfere with the institutions of religion.

But where the pride of power was forced to yield, the humanity of Jesus Christ triumphed. Seated in a private room, aside from noise and ostentation, with none to listen but his twelve disciples, he dared to pronounce the consummation of the Jewish Law. It is true that that law was not intended as perpetual, but the Jews regarded it as such. And least of all would they listen to the instructions or respect the authority of one who, in the private walks of life, without the mantle of the prophet, or robes of the priest, or sceptre of the king, should dare to interfere with the sacredness of institutions robed in the glories of the Shekinah, and sanctioned by the thunderings of the awful mount.

And how would they respect the last private act of one who had, all his life, shown public deference to their customs, and who even *now* was celebrating the Jewish passover? But the Master was come; and he would show himself the Master, not only of the *fact*, but of the method also; and he would do away their economy, not when he entered Jerusalem amid the shoutings of *Hosanna*, but when seated at a private table, in the retirement of a private dwelling.

It is now that he abolishes the institution, and takes his leave of all passovers. *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.* Here was one of the earliest and most eminent of the ceremonial ordinances abrogated.

The foundation of the whole system was swept away. *I will not any more eat thereof*, (nor shall it be eaten by my disciples,) *until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.* It was fulfilled when Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. The supper was originally instituted as a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt; and both the passover and the deliverance were typical (and, if you please, prophetical) of a Saviour to come, who should deliver us from sin, and death, and the tyranny of Satan. And when the *reality* was come, the type was laid aside. *Until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.* It was fulfilled when the ordinance of the Lord's supper (an ordinance of the kingdom of God—the *gospel*-kingdom) was instituted and took the place of the passover. But there was another part of the Paschal ceremony. *And he took the cup* (it was the Paschal cup) *and gave thanks and said: Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come. Divide it among yourselves*—break it up—do as you will with it—it is no longer for sacred, but for private use—we shall have no more occasion for it—the passover shall henceforth be celebrated no more, and you will soon be called to drink of another cup, when the kingdom of God is come. Then you shall celebrate the *Lord's supper*, which is to take the place of the passover, and commemorate a more glorious redemption than that from Egypt.

Here, then, the Jewish institutions are set aside. Typical, from their origin, of the great Messiah to come, Jesus Christ always showed them the respect which they demanded. But when his time was come, and the Lamb of God was ready for the sacrifice, he at the same time honored and destroyed them. Their design was accom-

plished; and Jesus Christ *desired* their abrogation, for the introduction of a better system. He had always kept this in view. Though he well knew that they could not be set aside except by his death, yet that death was the thing represented in every one of them, and he was ready to die.

Here let the infidel pause and ponder. Let him behold a private individual, in a private room of a private house, with only twelve persons to witness his intentions and afterwards sustain them. Let him behold that individual, there setting aside one of the most solemn institutions of a whole nation—an institution revered as the gift of God and observed for centuries, till every child knew its significance, and every heart acknowledged its obligations. Let him remember with how much tenacity of purpose mankind have always held on to their religion, and with how much difficulty a custom, interwoven with all the policies of the state and all the feelings of the fireside, can be broken down; and when he beholds Jesus Christ in such a situation, expecting by such means to accomplish such purposes, then let him say whether that expectation is madness or divinity. *History*, unparalleled in the record, has honored the expectation, and stamped the Godhead upon the act.

II. This was the introduction of the Christian dispensation, and the establishment of the Christian sacrament, in the new testament of his blood.

The Jewish church was a church of God, but there were some peculiarities in the ecclesiastical economy of the Jews, designed only for temporary continuance. It was the business of Christ to remove those peculiarities which had a shadow of good things to come, and to in-

troduce a more mild and spiritual form of worship. All his actions were directed, in some way, to the accomplishment of his mission. That great object was always kept in mind. He had long before expressed his intensity of feeling, when looking forward to the final result: *I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* It seems that the soul of Jesus was so intent upon the business of our salvation, that he found no spot to rest till it was fully accomplished. *How am I straitened!* Ah! how much more he strove for us than we do for ourselves! Where he was active, we are indolent. Where he was anxious, we are at ease.

This was the object which so perfectly engrossed him. Nothing could turn him aside from it. *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* He was not destitute of the strongest sympathies of our nature. He could pity the afflicted, delight in the company of his disciples, smile with affection upon Mary and Martha, and weep in tenderness at the grave of Lazarus. But nothing might interfere with the establishment of his kingdom and the salvation of his people. *And his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat; and he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*

One essential part of that work was the establishment of the Christian church and its ordinances. And since this was to be done at this supper—the passover abolished and the sacrament instituted—Christ, of course, desired the arrival of the occasion; and after the abolition of the one, he proceeds to institute the other.

You will notice that the language of the preceding verses, in which Christ abolishes the passover, is very

different from that in those verses where he institutes the sacrament. He ate of the Paschal lamb, and then said, *I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.* He took the Paschal cup also, and *gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.* But when he came to institute the sacrament, *he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it and gave unto them,* (he did not himself eat of it,) *saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.* It is not here added that he *would not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.* Just so, also, of the cup. *Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.* He did not drink of this, nor did he then add, as of the former cup, *I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come.* So that it is quite manifest that here were the two great things which we have noticed—the abrogation of the passover, and the institution of the sacrament which was to take its place. The history is more brief in the other evangelists, but if you will consult them, you will find them perfectly consistent with our view of this.

We have, then, the institution of this Christian ordinance. In this, Jesus was employed on the night before he was to die. He knew that death was at hand, and he spoke of his desire to eat this supper before he suffered. It was then with death in immediate prospect that he was employed in this business. Now we would ask, did *he* consider it business of small importance? Would *he* give the last evening of his life to institute a useless ceremony? Would *he* be trifling at his death-

feast? Think of this, all you who do not respect his dying request, *This do in remembrance of me.* Think of this, you who hope to be saved by his death, and yet disregard an ordinance instituted in the last hours of his life. Talk what you will of its being a mere ceremony. It is an ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ at that supper which he so earnestly desired, and under the most solemn circumstances that thought can conceive. He was just about to die, and think you he would trifle? Have you ever known the dying employed in unimportant business? Go to the death-bed of your friends, when the fearful reality is pressing upon them that in a few hours they must die; and if you find *them* trifling, then say this ordinance is a trifle. But will you say that Jesus Christ was indifferent to death, and therefore his conduct was not altered? Follow him from the Table to the garden, and behold him praying in an agony of blood, and then say whether he was indifferent, and whether the last hours of his life were expended on an institution of no value.

III. It is of cheering import to the Christian, as he comes to the Table of his Master, that Jesus Christ was so intent upon this solemn sacrament, that he came to institute it with strong desire, and that, too, on the very evening before his death.

No man, in the last hours of his life, forms new acquaintances, nor calls around himself those in whom he feels no peculiar interest. The season is too solemn, too precious, too sacred for casual intercourse; and he wishes, not the presence of strangers, but the society of those his heart holds most dear. And who could have a stronger testimony of affection from any man, than an invitation to come and spend with him the last hours

that he lived? This testimony had the disciples of Jesus Christ. *Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.* And he testified that love by calling them around him when his hour was come, and making that social and sacred intercourse the preparation for his death.

The whole business of Jesus Christ was business of love. It was love that brought him into the world, that regulated all his conduct while he continued in it, and that finally brought him to death. He would omit no opportunity of manifesting that love. To his friends he was always attentive and kind. There is no feeling of affection and tenderness which he did not manifest toward them. His whole soul was filled with kindness; and he left this last testimony of his unfailing attachment. Here, in the fellowship of the last supper, he opens his heart to communion with his disciples, and pledges his love over the symbols of his death. His disciples *could* not doubt; their hearts *must* have been alike softened and assured.

In this—in thus meeting in sacred fellowship those who loved him, when he was just about to die—he has left an assurance, to all future believers, of that holy communion which he will hold with them at his Table, and of that sacred unction which the heart shall receive when this is done *in remembrance* of him. *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.* It is here that Jesus meets his friends. It is here he speaks to them in that *still, small voice* which whispers peace. He tells us of sins forgiven—of weakness pitied—salvation pledged. And who could ever go from his Table with-

out feeling himself made better by the melting of the heart? Who could ever go from his Table without feeling that he had been in communion with the kindest of Masters and the best of friends? Who could ever go from his Table without feeling himself better prepared to follow Jesus to the death? Oh! if you were to die, would you not wish to go from the communion-table to your death-bed? Would you not carry with you a solace against the fear of death, and find the dark valley brightening as you approached its borders? But perhaps some of you *are* now coming to his Table for the last time. Come, then, in faith and love. Meet the kindness of your Master, and *his* love, prevailing over fear, shall prepare your dying motto,—*Oh! death, where is thy sting? oh! grave, where is thy victory?*

IV. Yes, it was at this communion that Jesus Christ prepared himself to die. It was here he instituted the ordinance which commemorates the great atonement. He knew the next day should witness his dying agonies; and here, by a prophetic act, he distributes his body and his blood. It is his preparation for death. He makes his will: it is *the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

The covenant is made; and the next day shall witness the sanction and the seal. Both earth and heaven shall add their signatures to stamp the unfailing covenant. The rocks shall rend—the grave give up its dead—the sun take in his beams—and even vile human nature respond the creed of heaven, from the lips of the centurion, *Verily, this was the Son of God.*

We have a few brief inferences from this subject.

1. We learn the great importance of this sacrament from the time and manner of its institution, and from

the earnest desire with which Jesus Christ came to the season of its appointment.

2. We learn its nature. It is the *will* of our Lord, in which he leaves to us the whole benefit of his death. It is our testimony of our acceptance of that will, and our taking upon ourselves the obligations of its conditions.

3. We learn these conditions. We are to serve our Master, if we would have the benefits of his death. Jesus is our Master. *We are not our own, we are bought with a price.* Hence,

4. We learn our duty and our privilege. Our duty: to serve our Master, not ourselves; to *glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are his*, and to serve him with fidelity; his example is our guide, and he was not indolent in the great business of his mission. Our privilege: to come to him with the assurance of his faithfulness and love. We have seen how kindly he met his disciples; he will not change,—*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.*

Here, then, it is our privilege renewedly to give ourselves away to God, to seal our covenant for heaven, before we die. God will not refuse the pledge, if we come with penitent and broken hearts, and with our souls resting, by faith, on Christ. Jesus will not send us away mourning, if we love him who so much loved us. No, he is a kind and compassionate Saviour. Come to him: your iniquities shall be forgiven, your sorrows soothed, your fears quieted, your hearts refreshed.

But we can not disguise the fear that some, who are coming this afternoon to commune, ought to have sad thoughts, as they look back to such seasons as this, which they have seen before; and thoughts not the less sad by reason of the tender love of Christ, indicated on

occasions like this. Do none of you remember how you have been at the Lord's table before, and, though surrounded, and for a little while impressed, with motives for holy living and with these august means for sacred comfort, how you have failed to profit by them? Does not your heart sink within you as you call to mind how unworthily you have lived,—what worldliness of spirit you have indulged,—what aims, what passions you have allowed to influence you,—how many times your heart has murmured against God, has wandered from Jesus, and dishonored his love and his cause? And now, as you remember your sins, and remember your former communion, vows and communion, delights, does not sorrow fill your heart and anguish take hold upon you, for fear that in your communicating you have found a curse instead of a blessing, and have turned the fountain of life into a stream of bitterness and death? Trembling believer, you must *not* go away. You must not refuse to commune. You must rush to the embrace of the same Jesus whom you have so cruelly dishonored. You must be covered with the blood which you have trampled under foot. You must pour your sorrows into that bosom whose love you have so ill requited, and whose love is still open to your penitential fears. You can do *nothing else*, but resort to Jesus. May it please him to regard your penitence, to dry up your tears, and give you grace to offend him no more! Lift up your voice: cry unto him, *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. O Lord, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies; but cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation.*

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose;
I know his courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose."

And he will not *plead against you with his great power.* He will *put strength in you.* Guilty as you have been, *weep and be forgiven.*

These are times of the outpouring of the divine Spirit. The living God has come to his heritage. This church ought to be devout, and humble, and holy, and happy in the God of Jacob. My dear brethren, God has blessed you. Your cry has come up before him. Your peace, your piety, your prayers have been regarded. *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O God, be all the glory.* But you see the mercy of God. He visits you. He refreshes you. It is the dear delight of this heart to believe he loves you. Love *him.* Praise him, praise him for his bounties! Souls saved are heaven's riches. Come to his Table to-day, blessing the name of God that you are again allowed to hail an addition to the friends of Jesus. Come, then, resolved in the strength of grace so to live and labor and pray, that the divine Spirit may abide with you, and still other sinners turn to Jesus and be forgiven. These times of refreshing ought to last. Heaven is bountiful, the Father is gracious, and Jesus loves poor sinners.

Have you no friend who will not be with you at the communion to-day, for whom you will pray, and hope that, if you come there again, that friend may come with you? Is there no husband, no wife of your bosom, no parent nor child, no brother nor kind and tender sister, who will this afternoon only look on, or stand aloof from the Table of God? Come and tell Jesus about

them. He who, in the days of his flesh, was moved when they pleaded with him, *My daughter lieth at home grievously tormented with a fever—Come down ere my son die*—has the same heart in heaven that he had on earth. Bear your requests to him. Pour your tears at his feet, and hope for, *expect* the continuance of his reviving spirit, till your hearts shall pour out richer thanks for friends of your life, made friends of the Saviour whom you love.

Some of you will come to the communion, fresh from the world. A little while ago you were strangers to Christ. *Ye loved the world, and the love of the Father was not in you.* You look back, and shrink from the precipice on which you were standing! Grace,—rich, sovereign grace,—has saved you. Ye are *brands plucked from the burning.* Oh! with what strength of purpose, with what gratitude and tender love, you should come to enter into covenant and plight your virgin vows! Those vows are going to be registered in heaven. If you ever forsake Jesus they will witness against you. But *fear not, thou worm Jacob; stronger is he that is in you than he that is in the world.* All hell can not hurt you if you lean on your beloved! Hell and the devil are Christ's conquered. Courage, then, thou trembler! God is with thee, if thou hidest thyself in Christ. Take him. He offers himself to you. He will love you the better, the more freely you approach. Say to him—

> "Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to thy cross I cling."

> "I'm a sinner, bought with blood;
> I'm a ransomed child of God."

Methinks he is even now waiting to meet you at his

Table, desiring, *with desire, to eat this passover with you*, while you remember that for you he has suffered. Meet us, divine Saviour, with thy blessing, and to thy name shall be the glory. Amen

II.

Meaning and Design of the Sacrament.

"This do in remembrance of me."—1 Cor. 11, 24.

THERE is something very remarkable, as well in the measures as in the doctrines of our religion. The men of the world, wherever the truths of the Bible have been plainly preached, have long been sensible that they were calculated to promote the best interests of society, to secure the purest morals, and to lay the foundation for quietude and happiness. Hence they have a kind of solemn respect for the doctrines of the gospel. And though they do not feel their power, they behold their efficiency, and cannot think ill of the fountain that sends forth so pure a stream. And while they respect, they admire, they wonder. They do not see the connection between the truth in the abstract and the truth in practice; and often witness results that disappoint their expectations.

The cause of this disappointment is to be found in the deficiency of their examinations. The truth has a spirituality and extent which they have not contemplated, and, consequently, it produces effects which they have little expected. If they saw the full extent of the doctrines, they would have less wonder at their practical results. And it is to be wished that men of

the world would enter more deeply into the examination of the subjects of the Bible. It would tend to convince them of their divine authority, and cause them to feel their own obligations to obedience. It is when the mind is enlightened that the joys of intelligence are experienced, and the worth of that intelligence is known. It is when the eagle gazes on the sun that his buoyant wing is spread, and his flight is toward the heavens.

And it is no less to be desired that Christians would enter more deeply into the truths of the Bible. They do know something of their excellence, and their souls have experienced something of their sweetness. But if they would think and study and pray more, they would enter more fully into the feelings of their religion, and find the soul swelling in celestial ecstasy to keep pace with the measure of their contemplations. The fountains of our religion are never dry. The stream is ceaseless that rolls around the Throne. The more we dwell upon the truths of Christianity, the more we shall know of their richness and variety. They are a golden mine, and the deeper we dig the richer is the ore.

There is a vast variety in the contemplations that we are called on to indulge. We may range with Solomon through the whole vegetable kingdom, from the towering cedar of Lebanon, to the *hyssop that springeth out of the wall.* We may follow his adventurers, and gather with them the gold of Ophir and the glittering gems of the East. We may sojourn with Moses, and become *learned in all the wisdom of Egypt*, or follow him in the desert and feed on manna. Indeed, everywhere we may *draw water from the wells of salvation*, and find them exhaustless as the river of God

If the doctrines of the gospel are remarkable in the richness of their instruction, the measures of the gospel are no less remarkable in the richness of their influence. The Almighty seems to have adopted every measure that can be devised to win, in the first place, our hearts; and to secure, in the next place, their sanctification. He would bring us all to the light of the truth; he would train us all for heaven. And he would fling upon the track of life so broad a light that we cannot miss our way, but may find it, like the path of the just, shining brighter and brighter, till its light is mingled with the glories of the Throne.

He has left none of our faculties without some measure to influence them. He speaks to all the feelings of our hearts, to all the powers of our mind, to all the motives of our will. He looks on us, such creatures as he has made us; and when he would reclaim us to himself, all the measures of his adoption show the wisdom of the plan.

This do (said Jesus Christ) IN REMEMBRANCE *of me.* Here was an act to consecrate the *memory* of the Christian. Christ would leave no faculty of the soul without his image; he would have them all wear the stamp of heaven, the livery of glory.

This DO *in remembrance of me.* Jesus here binds to the duty, lest we should not see the necessity of the ordinance. He makes the command positive, and would stretch the sceptre of his authority as well over the memory and sanctify its storehouse, as over the heart and hallow the fountains of our feelings.

This do in remembrance of ME. Jesus here presents himself as the object of our remembrance; and methinks I hear the whisperings of many a heart here in the pres-

ence of these emblems, *If I forget thee*, O divine Saviour, *let my right hand forget her cunning.* Methinks the aspirations of many pious souls are ascending to heaven, that God would accept their vows, and sanction this dedication of themselves to him. God of mercy, hear the prayers of thy children! Saviour of sinners, meet with the souls thou hast purchased! Spirit of grace, rest on the hearts thou hast sanctified!

This do in remembrance of me. We have here a positive command: *This do.* You will excuse us from considering this at present. Methinks we need no command to bring us to the Table of our Master. I feel that the hearts of his disciples love his communion, and the consideration of a command would come coldly across their bosoms. Away, then, with duty; let us deal with love. Let us come directly to the spirit of the communion, and contemplate that measure which Jesus Christ has adopted to represent his love to us, and kindle ours to him. And we have the spirit of the communion in these words—*in remembrance of me.* Here, then, let our contemplations fasten, let our gratitude waken, our devotions deepen!

In remembrance of me.

I. Permit us to call your attention to the nature of this sacrament, or the meaning of it, as a religious act, in those who partake of these emblems.

II. Let us contemplate this sacrament as one of the measures of God's appointment for preparing us for heaven.

III. We were going to add another article, but we will not multiply particulars. We do not come here to deal in logic, but to excite your love, to arouse your hearts, to kindle your devotion. We would have you

open your hearts to the love of Jesus; we would have you lift up your souls in pious supplication; we would have you come to the board of your Saviour as if this communion season were the closing act of your life, as if you were here taking upon your souls their dying dress, arraying them in those vestments of devotion in which you would wish to be ushered into the presence-chamber of your God. I deprecate the cold, calculating spirit which would come to the feast of Jesus Christ to speculate on some cold theory, to chill the devotions of the humble Christian when his heart kindles with the love of Jesus.

My brethren, we sometimes request your attention when it is an effort for you to give it. But to-day we ask no such effort. If the subjects of our contemplation do not hold you without a struggle to attend, refuse your attention, shut your ears against every word we have to say, and let your hearts rise in holy supplication to *him who hath loved us and given himself for us.* We had rather you would come around this board, your hearts glowing with love and soothed with humble devotedness to Jesus, than with your minds absorbed in the contemplation of the profoundest of arguments, even though that argument were a chain let down from heaven. Yes, Christian, whatever we may say, keep your heart humble, prayerful, devotional, affectionate. And may the Holy Comforter abide in your bosom, giving you *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

I. We were to call your attention to the nature of this sacrament, or the meaning of it, as a religious act, in those who partake of it.

This sacrament is a solemn oath. This is the meaning of the word. When we partake of it we place our-

selves under the awful obligation of an oath. We swear to be for Jesus Christ, and not for another. *This do in remembrance of me.* It is our act, and it binds us to Jesus Christ. He requires of us the duty, and presents himself as the object of that duty. And whenever we perform it we renew our sacred oath, and again take upon ourselves its holy obligations.

The word sacrament is of Roman origin, and it may assist us to understand its meaning, if we glance for a moment at its meaning and use with the Romans. We speak now merely of the *word*—not of its application to this Christian ordinance.

This word sacrament meant, from its first use, a sacred oath. When the commanders of the Roman soldiery would bind the Roman legions to their duty, they required of them a sacrament, which they called *sacramentum*—a sacred oath. The substance of the oath was this: they swore to defend the life of the emperor, to obey the orders of their officer, and never to desert the standards of the empire. You see it bound them to their duty as good soldiers; it secured obedience to their lawful commander, and taught them that they owed allegiance to the empire. This was the meaning of their *sacramentum*—their sacred oath. And no one who had not taken this oath was allowed to muster in the ranks of the legions, or anywhere to fight against the enemies of Rome. On particular occasions this sacrament was renewed, and the soldier was not suffered to forget who was his commander and what his duty.

Now, this same word sacrament is applied to the ordinance we contemplate. And the meaning of it here is very much the same as it was among the Roman legions. It is a sacred oath, in which we swear our

allegiance to Jesus Christ—*in remembrance of me.* We take upon ourselves this obligation, and pledge ourselves to follow Jesus Christ as the Captain of our salvation.

My dear brethren, our religion is a warfare; Jesus Christ is our Captain; the world, the flesh, and the devil are our foes; and heaven is the object of our contest. Let us gird on, then, the harness of the Christian soldier! Let us *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, even the weakest of us, *knowing that our Master is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand, therefore,* in your Master's strength, *having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able* (my brethren, I am reciting a promise of Jesus Christ) *to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* When you are thus prepared, when you have thus girded on the harness of the Christian soldier, come to this sacrament, this solemn oath, and take upon yourselves the obligation to be for Jesus Christ—swear to him that, *whether living*, you will *live unto the Lord*, or, dying, you will *die unto the Lord; that whether living or dying, you will be the Lord's.* But there is one article of the Christian dress we did not mention. *Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit.* Forget not this; and when you come to take this oath, let the supplication of your inmost souls be poured forth to God that he will accept the dedication of yourselves to him, and register your names on the muster-roll of heaven.

Again. One of the heathen writers has informed us how he viewed this sacrament. He says the early Christians were accustomed to assemble and eat together, and bind themselves with an oath not to commit any wickedness, and to live together as brothers. An oath to holiness, an oath to brotherly affection.

Let us take this explanation. Jesus Christ is not the minister of sin. He would have us *depart from* all *iniquity;* he would have us, *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Let us not refuse the other part of this explanation,—to live together as brothers. It was during that supper when Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament—when he was, for the last time before his death, comforting his disciples—when he was about to be betrayed into the hands of men—when Judas had risen from the board, and was groping through the darkness of night to find the residence of the chief priest, that he might betray his Lord,—it was at this time that Jesus Christ uttered these remarkable words: *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.* A NEW commandment —it was one that had never been uttered before: never before had pious people been commanded to love pious people because they were such. And now, when Jesus was just about to die, he utters this commandment as part of his last counsel. It seems associated with this ordinance. It was uttered at this Table. Here Jesus bound his followers to brotherly affection. Judas was

not there. Let there be no Judas here. Let us all take upon ourselves this obligation—let us add this to our oath.

Once more. Every oath has some conditions on which it is based. We are not required to make this oath without motive. There is another party to the compact. We here enter into covenant with Jesus Christ, and if we give ourselves to him, he gives himself to us. The covenant is mutual, and if we are faithful, he is *faithful that hath promised.* You know the promise is eternal life. You have then the conditions of your oath. Do you ask the pledge? There, Christian, is the pledge, *In remembrance of me.* What a pledge is here! The body and blood of Jesus Christ! What more could we have received? what more could God have given?

Let us accept the pledge, and trust, without wavering, our God for the fulfilment of the promise. For, *if he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Here, then, let us take our sacrament, our oath. Let us swear before God, angels, and men, that we will belong to Jesus Christ, that we will *obey* the Captain of our salvation, that we will never desert his standard, that we will fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, that we will yield to no wickedness, and that, in obedience to our *new commandment*, we will *love one another.* Let us seal this oath in remembrance of a crucified Saviour, and consider ourselves bound by the awful obligations of his blood.

But, methinks, the heart of some trembling believer shrinks from this awful obligation. Some soul, borne down with a sense of sinfulness, fears to come under

this oath, lest, in some moment of weakness, temptation should prevail, and the oath be broken.

My dear friends, let us all have this fear, but let us not refuse the obligation. We have no strength of our own, but we come here to gain strength. Let us, then, *all* come to this oath, fearful of ourselves, but confident of our Redeemer; feeling our weakness, but trusting that we shall *come off more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us. When I am weak, then am I strong.*

Does not the heart of many an humble Christian repeat, Yes, I will give myself to Christ. I will renew my obligation to be his. When I think of what he has done for me, when I remember my miserable condition, sinful and poor and perishing, when I call to mind what he has suffered that I might be free, when I see him in the manger at Bethlehem, when I behold him on the cold mountain-top, his locks wet with the dews of the night, when I follow him to the Garden of Gethsemane and watch him praying in an agony of blood, when I behold him on the Cross, bleeding and dying for me, my heart can not refuse this obligation—*the love of Christ constraineth me;* and, wretched as I am, he will not *leave* me *comfortless.* I will be his.

Thus the Christian, trembling though confiding, takes the oath, and gives himself to Christ.

II. Let us then, in the next place, contemplate this sacrament as one of the measures of God's appointment for preparing the sinner for heaven.

We have already seen that the Christian here gives himself up to Christ. He does it as a helpless sinner, needing pardon and sanctification. He does it, trusting in the merits and the mercy of Christ—in the sufficiency of his atonement, and in the freeness of his grace. We

do not say that he has not done all this before. If he is a sincere Christian, he *has* done it before. But he has made no public and official surrendry of himself; and very often does not feel himself to be one of Christ's disciples. It is one thing to *be* so, and another thing to *feel* it, and realize that it is so. And this is one of the measures of God's appointment to prepare the Christian to feel himself a Christian. He may be such, it is true, without a public oath; but his deceitful heart will often bring him into trouble. He will sometimes think, when temptation besets him, he may do this,—he may yield to this little transgression,—because it is no more than all the world do, and he has not made a profession of religion. Hence he is led astray where the professing Christian would be secure. Just so of Christian duties. He who makes no public profession, though a Christian at heart, may very often excuse himself from Christian duties because he has not taken the oaths of God. His deceitful heart tells him that he need not discharge them, because he has not bound himself to do so. Hence he neglects them, and consequently does not improve by them, and grow in grace and ripen for heaven. Who ever knew a person of much piety out of the church?

What does the professing Christian do in all these cases? He says the oaths of God are upon him; he feels himself a Christian. Hence he resists temptation, he discharges duty, and consequently grows in grace and ripens for heaven. He is influenced by a motive which others do not feel, and God gives him success where those who take no oath would falter and fail. It is when we rally under the *banners* of our Captain that we conquer.

Here, then, is one of the measures of God's appoint-

ment for our progressive sanctification. *In remembrance of me* is a holy watchword to the Christian. It reminds him of his oath, and it points him to his power. It gives him no feelings of personal exaltation; it teaches him to be humble and prayerful and watchful and obedient; and when he glories, he glories in the Lord. If I have witnessed Christian feeling any where, or the sweetness of Christian faith any where, or the strength of Christian faith any where, it has been in communion exercises.

We did intend to speak of several other items, under the consideration of this measure of love, but we will not detain you from the oath. We pass over the consecration of our memory, the ennobling sentiment of self-devotion, the awakening calls to gratitude, the strong security to meekness and self-denial. In all these articles, we might show the wisdom of this means of grace.

But it is enough that you know it is a means of grace, if your hearts are ready for its improvement. And if they are, come to the Table of your Master, and you shall find this sacrament as rich in consolation as you would be wretched without it. This is one of the three channels of grace, one of the three rivers of mercy that water this garden of God. The word of God, prayer, and the sacraments are the only channels of divine communication. They are the only measures of God to fit us for heaven. These are the three fountains of mercy that are opened beneath the Throne. Here we behold them, spreading fertility around our Zion. Come, then, to this means of grace, this measure of wisdom, this pledge of consecration, this oath of allegiance. Come, with your soul humbled under a sense of your

unworthiness, with your mind filled with contemplations of your Saviour's mercy, with your heart overflowing in gratitude to God. Come, mourning for your sins, sensible of your weakness, feeling your poverty. Come, wash away your sins in blood—gain strength from Christ—be made rich in faith;—come, *do this in remembrance of* him.

Come to give yourself away to Jesus Christ, to renew your covenant, to take your oath, to seal your soul with blood. Come to promise allegiance to God—submission to Jesus Christ—love to the brethren. Are you sorrowful? come to be consoled. Are you sinful? come to be cleansed. Are you fearful? *Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.* Whatever may be your affliction, come. *This do in remembrance of me.*

But some of you have never been at the Table of God before; you come now for the first time to remember Christ in the sacramental supper. For your sakes especially I have chosen this text. I have felt that your security and comfort would depend very much on your constant and cherished remembrance of your Saviour. I do trust that the Holy Spirit has renewed your hearts, and thus rendered it fit that you should be at the communion-table. But you are not yet in heaven. You have the desert to travel, the foe to meet, Jordan to cross. Your best security lies in remembering Christ—remembering all he has done for you, all he promises, all he forbids, all he claims, all he has given. It is only a little while since sorrows and fears filled your hearts. You saw your sins, your God offended, your souls hasting to eternity! We wept in your affliction, and we bless the hand that has taken it away. Remember whose it was. It was Christ's—it was Christ's! You

found no peace till you found it in loving the Saviour. You are now to profess that love, and you will find constant benefit by cherishing the remembrance of the Saviour. Learn to repeat these words: *Who loved* ME *and gave himself for me.* There is great efficacy in remembering those that have loved us.

When you are tried, when you are troubled or tempted, remember Christ; remember his love, his sacrifice, his agony and blood. This remembrance will give you courage, it will call you to duty, it will keep you from sin, it will guard your heart from many a pang, it will furnish you many a sweet song in this house of your pilgrimage; and, as you look forward to your end, you will learn to sing—

"I will praise him again when I pass over Jordan."

Live nigh to Christ. Never allow the *pride of life* and the fashion of this world to control you. Be wholly your Saviour's, and then make the Saviour wholly yours. Bathe in his blood. Rest in his bosom. Requite him with love for love; tenderness for tenderness. May God keep you, and bring us to meet in that happier world where our love and joy and communion shall be perfect and uninterrupted forever and ever. Amen.

III.

Christ Precious to Believers.

"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious."—1 Peter ii. 7.

WITH what words more suitable can we commence the exercises of this hour. *Unto you which believe, he is precious.* What sentiment more fit for the communion-table than this? *Unto you which believe, he is precious.* What words shall sooner find an echo in the heart of the believer, as he comes to the feast of love?

Here, in the presence of these emblems, and about to renew the consecration of your bodies and souls to Jehovah-Jesus, *to you which believe, he is precious.* Here, as sinners against God yet hoping for pardon, as guilty of crimes so great that the Son of God must die to expiate them, as rebels against heaven yet reconciled by the death of Jesus, as lost to holiness and happiness and hope yet saved by his life, here shall we not extol our crucified Redeemer, and in our hearts' high estimation exalt him as the chosen of our souls, the *chiefest among ten thousand and one altogether lovely?* On this spot, long hallowed to our exalted Saviour, where he has often verified his promise, *I will not leave you comfortless,*

I will come to you, shall we not exclaim, Unto us indeed *he is precious?* On this spot, where more than one soul now in heaven has formerly celebrated his dying love, shall we not meet around his board? Unto us also *he is precious*. On this spot, where many of your kindred, now gone to the grave, once held communion with their Master, do you not feel it a holy privilege to commune with him as precious to your souls?

Perhaps, believer, the departed spirit of some friend now looks down from heaven upon you, and rejoices that Jesus is precious to your heart. Some father, who from this communion-table once sent up his prayers for you, may now look down upon you. Some mother, who once wept for her darling child, may now be praising God that tears of pious grief are held in remembrance in heaven. Some child, who once on this spot found Jesus precious to the fainting heart, may now be leaning upon the golden lyre, and resting from its heavenly strains to mark whether, to that parent so beloved, Jesus is indeed precious.

True, we know not the employments of departed souls; but, if they ever can cease from the praises of the Lamb in heaven, surely they must note those who celebrate his dying love on earth. If the affairs of this world hold any place in their minds, they must sometimes come back to the altars of their lifetime, where they first swore fidelity to their precious Saviour. And in such estimation as your glorified kindred hold the Lord of Life, now that they have gone home to eternal rest, in such estimation we wish you to hold him as you come to the sacramental board.

To you which believe, he is precious.

Yes, there are hearts which hold him in high estimation

now. They are not under the necessity to wait till the days of their pilgrimage are ended before they know enough of the Lord Jesus to fill them with holy delight in his character. However much the joys of heaven surpass those of earth, there is joy on earth in the heart of the true believer. To him Jesus Christ is precious now; not merely regarded as some proper and valuable resource for the time to come, but held in present estimation. *To you which believe, he is precious.*

Which believe;—it is to believers on earth. He may indeed be, and doubtless is, precious to the angels and saints in heaven, who gaze upon the brightness of his unveiled glories—precious as the theme of their undying song. He is precious to the Father, *The Father loveth the Son. When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him.* He was precious in angelic estimation when they announced his birth to the shepherds. *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* The listening shepherds heard the song, chanted by a multitude of the heavenly host, *Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will toward men.* What a birth-song! Had not the court of heaven, think ye, some high estimation of him who was now *wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger?* This humiliation seems not in the least to have lessened their estimation of him. *Angels came and ministered unto him* after he had *fasted forty days and forty nights* and been *tempted of the devil.* When he agonized in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane,—*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me,—an angel appeared unto him, strengthening him.*

And they did not abandon him when he was laid in the tomb; an angel rolled back the stone, while the affrighted earth trembled and quaked.

Thus you perceive that you are not alone in your attachment to Jesus Christ. If to believers *he is precious*, so he is to those who never fell from heaven's high eminence and lost the holiness of their nature. And if you are fond of accompanying him in the garden, or of musing over his sepulchre, so were angels. If you are fond of chanting his praises, so are angels. He has now gone back to heaven, and the angels tune their harps to his glory,—*I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.*

To you which believe, he is precious. Which believe. And is he then precious to them only? Are there no others to whom he is precious? No; none. *He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.* It is to those *which* BELIEVE that Jesus is precious. This is the declaration of the inspired penman, and we dare not alter or obscure its sense. We have then this sentiment, that faith is necessary in order to have such a regard for Jesus Christ that he can with propriety be called precious to us. It is not improbable that some who have no faith are hoping still, in some way, to be saved through Christ, and therefore do not and dare not openly contemn his doctrines and the offers of his grace. But they openly neglect them, and while they continue to do so they have not the senti-

ment that Christ is precious. This is a sentiment of faith, and without faith it has no existence. The converse of the proposition is equally true. In whatever heart faith exists, there this sentiment of the preciousness of Christ exists. Faith has not existence in any heart to which Christ is not precious.

I. But what is meant by *precious?* Let us see what this includes.

1. Christ is precious to you which believe, i. e., he is *honored.* The word which is here translated *precious* is sometimes translated *honor.* It is here used in the abstract; a more exact translation of it would be, *to you which believe he is honor.* That is, you honor him above every thing else. You set him in your estimation as the honor of all things, and you *honor the Son even as you honor the Father.* You count him the height of honor. You esteem it your highest honor to belong to him, and would rejoice to be found *worthy to suffer* even dishonor and ignominy and affliction for his sake. All other honor, when it comes in competition with this, you despise, for this is the very essence of honor.

2. Christ is precious to you which believe, i. e., he is valued. He holds a place in your affections above all other objects. Your faith sets an infinite value upon him. It has taught you (strange as you once thought such language) that one who *loveth father or mother more than him is not worthy of him, and he that loveth son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him.* And here again we recur to the abstract meaning of the word. *To you which believe he is preciousness*—this is the exact translation—i. e., the very essence of every thing you hold precious. Other things you value. Your friends claim your affections. Your children call forth the warmth of your heart as the full

tide of parental affection swells in your bosom. But even parental tenderness discovers their defects, and there will be something you cannot love. But here is an object without defect. Here is *one* ALTOGETHER *lovely*. Whatever qualities of amiability, or kindness, or sympathy, or strong affection, you find in them, you behold the same heightened to infinitude in Jesus Christ. What complaisance at the feast of Cana! what tenderness at the grave of Lazarus! what filial affection upon his Cross! *Woman, behold thy son!*—he was then agonizing in death, but he soothed a mother's fears. In short every thing that the heart can value you find in Jesus Christ, *whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now you see him not, yet,* BELIEVING, *ye rejoice*—this is the feeling of believers—*with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

3. Again: Those things which we honor and value we naturally seek. So here, *To you which believe he is precious*, i. e., is sought. You delight in searching for him, to know more and more of him. You would esteem it your greatest pleasure to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* To hold some little intercourse with him, transient and infrequent, is not enough for the believer. He would be often and long in his company, for he is the *chosen* object, selected from all other objects of interest and affection. He would abandon other converse to hold converse with Christ. And the believer has made no mistake in his estimation, for we are told in this chapter that Christ is *chosen of God and precious.* The estimation of the believer is therefore the same as that of God. And who can hesitate to seek that in which God himself delights? The believer does seek for him. He

never knows enough of him. Sometimes, indeed, he forgets for a moment the desire of his soul. He yields to the seductions of other objects. But he finds no satisfaction in them. All the honors and pleasures of the world, when not enjoyed with him who *is precious*, soon grow insipid. In the midst of all, the true believer mourns when Jesus is not with him. And he soon feels the emotions of one who knew Christ of old: *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* He feels as Moses felt, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* And if he has been so weak and wicked as ever to forsake his Lord, he soon finds his soul empty of its felicity, and he turns back with penitence, bitter, indeed, but his tears fall, like Mary's, on the feet of Jesus.

In one word, there is not one principle of his existence which does not find its highest and holiest employment here. Love, hope, joy, admiration—every passion of the heart,—finds here its sweetest exercise.

II. But what makes Christ so precious to the believer? This is the second topic we proposed to notice. But need I *here* ask such a question? Must we repress the heart's high emotions to descend to reasoning and explanation? We must indeed say why Christ is so precious, but we will endeavor to assign no reason which can damp the fire of your devotion. And there are those here who *have not so learned Christ*, who are not believers, to whom he *has no form nor comeliness, and when they see him there is no beauty that they should desire him.* We would endeavor to show them that we have good reason for regarding him as precious, in order to bring them, if possible, to the same precious faith.

1. And first, he is precious on account of his nature. I suppose those who reject his salvation are not apt to dwell on this thought. And I suppose those who run into error on this point are not apt to have such a faith as makes Jesus Christ the *preciousness* of their souls.

Let us then dwell for one moment on this point, keeping close to the text and its connections. We read, *Unto you which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* Do you know, my hearers, who it is that is this *stone of stumbling and rock of offence?* The thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the eighth chapter of Isaiah will inform you. It is there said, *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.* It is, then, the *Lord of Hosts himself* that is *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.* St. Peter here quotes the words of Isaiah: *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture*, says he, and then proceeds to quote from the twenty-eighth and from the eighth chapter of that prophet. And the whole shows beyond dispute, that this *stone of stumbling and rock of offence* is *the Lord of Hosts himself.*

This, then, shows us the *nature* of him who is precious. He is the *Lord of Hosts* himself, and well may the heart of the believer cling to him. What else shall be as precious as his divine Saviour? Where shall he go but to his God? He does not rest his heart upon any created being, but on the *Lord of Hosts* himself. He does not trust his soul in the keeping of any created

being, but in the keeping of the *Lord of Hosts* himself. He *believes* with a faith that has no misgivings, in regard to Jesus Christ. It may sometimes be a weak faith, and sometimes a wavering faith. But the weakness and the wavering of it are in himself, and on account of infirmity and remaining sin. He may doubt his own sincerity, but he does not doubt the power of Christ. He may sometimes lose the strength and the joys of his faith, and think he has no piety and never had any. But if his heart *has ever* been brought to believe, it has no doubts of the full power of Jesus Christ and the joys that may be found in his love. And he will seek him again if ever he has wandered from him, knowing that he has wandered from his God.

Why, then, should not this Saviour be precious? He is precious in his nature, and why should not the believer shelter himself beneath the shield of Omnipotence?

2. In the second place, he is precious on account of his instructions.

He came for a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on him *might not abide in darkness.* And he is still a light to those who *abide in him.* Their eye searches not after the light of this world to direct their steps. It is the eye of faith, and they *walk by faith.* It is fixed on a star that never wanders—on a sun that is never eclipsed. Jesus Christ is himself their light, giving all necessary instruction. They wish to see, and he *opens* their blind eyes. He shows them how sinful they are, for they never know this till they read it in the dignity of his sacrifice. He shows them how holy and just and pure is their offended God, for they are ignorant of this till they behold the *light of the knowledge of*

the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He shows them how such sinners can get to heaven. The whole world could not have told them this, with all the wisdom and science and philosophy which six thousand years have produced.

Why, then, (let me ask again,) should not Christ be precious to them? How it must delight their souls to be instructed in the lessons of salvation! What transporting emotions arise in their hearts as he teaches them in the science of heaven! Do not suppose I speak of those who have no faith. No, it is of the feelings of faith, and of those only, that I speak. Or shall I not rather say, it is faith itself? I speak of those feelings that come over the heart that is open for the entrance of a Saviour; of that holy calmness and peace of mind which constitute the *inward witness* of a Saviour's presence; of that unshaken confidence and filial trust which submit the mind, the heart, and the will to Jesus Christ. Those who have not thus submitted have no knowledge of the sweet lessons of *him who spake as never man spake.* They have not tried his instructions; they have not *tasted* that he is gracious; and they can no more judge of the inner sentiments of the heart that is open to him, than a blind man can judge of colors or a deaf man of music. But the heart of the true believer *is* open to him. This opening of the heart, when he *stands at the door and knocks, is* faith. And shall we not, then, call those joys of intimate communion a *part of faith?* joys which the believer possesses when Jesus *comes in to sup with him.* However this may be, the heart that believes in Jesus Christ finds his instructions sweet as the river of life, precious as the soul's redemption, joyous as the hopes of glory.

3. He is precious on account of his atonement. This I suppose, after all, is the main thought intended in the text; I come to this conclusion from the connection in which it stands.

Immediately before the text it is said, *Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious . . He that believeth on him shall not be confounded: unto you therefore* —He is precious, you perceive, because he is the *sure foundation. Other foundation can no man lay.* And he is the sure foundation by reason of his atonement; for in another place it is said, *Ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the* BLOOD *of Christ . . . and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* The atonement of Christ, therefore, constituting a sure foundation, is the great reason why he is so precious.

And here again let me ask, Why should not believers find him precious? He is the foundation on which they build; *they shall never be confounded.* It is a foundation laid in blood: the wickedness of man and the malice of hell cannot shake it. Why then shall not the believer prize this above everything else? He comes to Jesus Christ as a poor, guilty, and lost sinner. His heart faints within him; he is weary and heavy-laden; bitterness comes over his soul; conscience kindles up in his spirit the fiery torments of unmingled misery; the terrors of God thunder in his ears; the pit yawns for his entrance—Oh! my God, shall we not prize thy mercy which delivers from all this?

Here then, believer, you may build with safety If

you have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, you know something of this preciousness. But you need to *build up yourself on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.* Then build here; this is a precious foundation, and you never will find it less precious. When the hopes of those who have no Saviour are swept away in the wrath of God, when they call upon *the rocks and mountains to cover them*, you shall not be confounded. Build on this foundation, and—what shall I say?—the thunders of the eternal shall break harmless around you.

Oh! why cannot we persuade all to build here? You have all souls to save or lose, and you ought to be building for immortal life. Why will you not come to this precious Saviour? He is willing to receive you, and your souls will be safe resting on this foundation. I do not ask you to build on any foundation of man's devising: this is the foundation of the eternal God. I do not ask you to commit your immortal spirit to the keeping of a created saviour,—no, not to the highest angel that ever God created. Creatures have no merits to spare; they owe for themselves to the God that created them, all they can ever do; and therefore no created being can purchase your salvation. But here is the salvation purchased by the Lord of hosts, and why should you make him *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence?*

Why should so few be found at his table, since we are all sinners, and he is enough for us all? His salvation is free—*without money and without price.*

4. There is another reason we intended to mention, why Christ is precious,—on account of his direction and control. He never leaves those who trust in him, till

having guided them through all the difficulties of life and death, he introduces them into the presence of the angels. But we must pass this topic. Other scenes occupy us. Here we come around the Table of him who is precious to every believer. Here we bury every animosity, extinguish every resentment, forgive every injury. O that we could all sit down to this feast, and find our Saviour precious to our souls! Saviour of sinners, be thou the Saviour of those who know not how precious thou art, and let us yet meet them at thy Table and in thy heaven; and thine be the glory. Amen!

IV.

My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matt xxvii. 46.

THIS is the expression of Jesus Christ, as he hung upon the Cross. He had passed through the years of the flesh, accomplishing the work which brought him from heaven, and now he was surrendering up his life amid the most cruel torments. In anticipation of his ufferings, his soul in the Garden was *exceeding sorrowful;* and afterward on the Cross he endured all the insults that the most embittered malignity could heap upon him. He was mocked and buffeted and spit upon; he was treated as a guilty criminal,—placed between two thieves, as if most worthy of a bad preëminence; he was in the hands of his foes, and the taunts and gibes and sneers of the insulting rabble mingled with his groans.

But is it not strange that one such as Jesus Christ was should utter this exclamation? Is it not strange that one who *knew no sin* should be in this agony? Did he lose his trust in God, or can God forsake those who trust in him? None of us form any ideas of Jesus

Christ, or of the Father, which can justify this mournful exclamation. We always conceive of Jesus Christ as *holy, harmless, undefiled;* and therefore we should not expect such a complaint as this. We always conceive of the Father as delighting in the Son, and faithful to all such as trust in him; and therefore should not expect him to forsake that Son whose trust in him was always unshaken.

There is something wonderful and mysterious in this deep-toned complaint of the dying Jesus, as he mourned that he was forsaken of his God. And it is our present intention,

I. To examine this mystery, spreading it out that we may behold its wonders.

II. To throw as much light across it as we are able.

III. We must confess our weakness, and learn to wonder and adore at the view of those mysteries into which we are unable to dive.

IV. We must derive, from the whole of this, reflections suitable for that ordinance which commemorates the death of Jesus Christ, and which to-day brings his followers around his Table.

This is the whole plan of this discourse.

But, my brethren, we never approach themes like this without being pained by a sense of our own imbecility. We never enter upon the duties of an hour like this without feeling ourselves inferior to the occasion. We never stand before these emblems, and look around upon waiting believers, hungry for the bread of life, and waiting for the consolations of the gospel from lips like these, without painfully fearing that we shall disappoint the hopes of the longing soul. There is so much of everlasting interest hung around this ordinance, there is

so much of intense feeling coming here to exert itself, there is so much of trembling and confidence, of hope and despair, of joy and bitterness, swelling in the bosom of these communicants, and there is so much of awful solemnity in the dying exclamation of a crucified Saviour, that we can not stand here without feelings too big for utterance. What if we should fail to show you the sufficiency of Jesus? What if some fainting soul, fearing, like the publican, *so much as to lift up its eyes to heaven*, should turn away without knowing the tender compassion of a dying Saviour? O God! we cast ourselves upon thy power. Holy Spirit! take thou of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto us. Exalted Saviour! give strength and consolation to every weak believer, and let our communion with thee supply the deficiency of all earthly guidance.

I. We said, my brethren, it was a very wonderful thing that, when Jesus Christ came to die, he should utter the complaint we read to you. He here complains that his God had *forsaken* him. The complaint seems to have been uttered in the greatest agony of spirit. He not only calls upon God, but he repeats the words: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* His whole soul seems to have been overwhelmed; there was here an intensity of anguish; and if any one ever died in bitterness of spirit, it was Jesus Christ.

But now, in what manner might you have expected Jesus Christ to die? If he must die, would you not have thought that he would die in triumph; that one who was the favorite of heaven, one who foresaw and foretold his death, and often conversed about it with his friends, one, in short, who came into the world for this very purpose,—would you not have expected him to

meet death with constancy and composure? Would you not have thought that the recollections of a life of purity would have sustained him in that hour? that the anticipations of his glory would have drowned the miseries of dying?

If you would have had such an expectation, it would have been no irrational one; the nature and the history of Jesus Christ, and the history of the world, would justify it.

1. The nature of Jesus Christ would justify it. Who was Jesus Christ? Isaiah described him when, with the eye of the prophet, he looked down through the mists of ages to the coming of Christ. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* St. John described him. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* Would it not be reasonable to expect that one wearing such titles, if he were to die after he was made flesh, would die in triumph?

2. The history of Jesus Christ would justify such an expectation. Aside from the purity of his life and his willingness to die, notice the manifestations of might and glory that had attended him. Multitudes were fed by his miracles, the blind saw, the lame walked, the sick rose to health, the dead came forth from the tomb. When the band of armed men, guided by the traitor Judas, came out to take him, he said unto them, *Whom seek ye?* they answered, *Jesus of Nazareth*; no sooner had he said unto them, *I am he*, than *they went backwards and fell to the ground*: one flash of his divinity smote them

to the earth. Even when he first came into the world, though an outcast from the dwellings of men, and cradled in a manger, the glory of God shone across the plains of Bethlehem, angels chanted his birth-song, and a new star took its place in the heavens to look down upon his birthplace. Would it not then be reasonable to suppose that one who could perform these miracles, who had prostrated the armed soldiery with a word, one whose nativity must be marked by a new star, and to celebrate whose birth a choir must be sent from heaven,—is it not reasonable to suppose that, if he must die, he would die in triumph?

3. The history of the world would justify such an expectation.

We are very much in the habit of expecting that what *has* been may be; we make the history of the past our prophet of the future. This is a method of reasoning upon our experience, and making inductions according to the extent of our own or others' observations. And the human mind is so constituted that it is incapable of resisting the conclusions of this inductive method. We are compelled, by the constitution of our very nature, to expect a resemblance in events which are attended or preceded by circumstances of resemblance. On this conclusion most of our daily calculations and daily conduct are based. We expect sickness to be followed by death, the rain to descend after the rising of the cloud, the sun to ripen our harvests, and the succession of days and nights to continue. For this expectation we need no other voucher than our experience, than the knowledge of what has been. So, with respect to the manner of our dying. We expect a holy man to lay down his life with feelings very different from the ungodly. The

history of death's dealings from the beginning of the world justifies this expectation.

Looking back to the days before the flood, we find that Enoch, who *walked with God*, had no struggle in the day of his departure: *he was not, for God took him.* There was a religious man *translated, that he should not see death.*

And how, then, shall Jesus Christ die? Shall not he depart hence as gloriously as Enoch? Shall not the chariot and horses of fire that bore Elijah to heaven be vouchsafed for the translation of Jesus Christ, while some anointed follower (like the young Elisha, who gazed upon his father soaring to heaven) bears testimony that he departed in a blaze of glory? Or shall he not, at least, go up in peace, like Moses on the mount? Why, at least, shall not Jesus Christ die as triumphantly as St. Paul? St. Paul could contemplate the day of his death with holy exultation, longing *to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.* Why not as gloriously as Stephen? When he was dying, the heavens were opened, and he looked in upon their splendor. But when Jesus Christ was dying, the heavens were shut up, the sun took back his beams, and darkness covered the earth.

The death of Jesus Christ was marked with very little of that *composure* which we have a right to expect in the death of the just. Many a saint has breathed out his life with more calmness than he, and many a martyr at the stake, or on the scaffold, has been more unmoved. It is true that every good man has not died in triumph

Their sun sometimes goes down in clouds, but its twilight still lingers around the shades of their tomb. But in this death of Jesus Christ we have none of that triumphant buoyancy which has so often marked the death of the exulting martyr, and none of that composure which has so often curtained the death-bed of the expiring Christian. With Jesus Christ all is dark: he anticipated dying with a soul *exceeding sorrowful;* he hangs upon the cross sustained by no inward feeling of triumph; he dies, assuaged by no tranquillity of soul. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* is the strong expression of his dying agony!

We know that there are many things which conspire to make death dreadful, and some one of which embitters the death of very many of our race. But if we examine these in detail, we shall find that none of them could have embittered the death of Christ.

1. Death itself is an awful event, from which it is the nature of every living being to shrink. To die is of itself something so dreadful that no being covets it. Despair of the present, and joyous anticipations of the future, may indeed take away its sting, and make us desire it; but, of itself, it *is* an evil, to which nothing but greater misery or over-balancing anticipations can reconcile us. But was not Jesus Christ reconciled in this way? Did he not know he would conquer? Did he not know that death would restore him to the glory *which he had with the Father before the world was?* And have not multitudes died with feelings that took away all fear? It was not this, therefore, which caused the dying agony of Christ.

2. When one is about to die, and looks back upon a life misspent and misimproved, such an examination will

be likely to make death more dreadful. In that hour to have the recollection of our iniquities come thronging over the soul, to look back on a life devoted to earthly pleasure, and find the echo of our former revelry mingling with the death-groan that heaves our bosom,—may well embitter the last moments we have to live. When the father sees, circling his death-bed, the children that God has given him, and remembers that his whole life has been an example of impiety tending only to lead them to ruin,—how sadly will the thought come over his soul! When the mother calls her children to give them her dying kiss and blessing, oh! how it will embitter her tears when she remembers that all her life she has neglected her duty. These children that I love so fondly, these children that I am just leaving,—these children, when I am dead, must remember a mother who neglected their dearest interests—scarcely ever even prayed with them, to prepare them for such an hour as this!

Such thoughts would make death most miserable to any one. In short, when any man looks back from the hour of death upon a life misspent or misimproved, a life in which he has made no provision for that to come, we cannot expect him to die in peace.

But was it this that embittered the death of Jesus? No, the days of his childhood had witnessed his devotion to the offices he had to perform, and to the kindness of parental solicitude he could answer, *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business.* He *knew no sin*, he neglected no duty, and when the time was come that he was to depart out of the world, we find him calm in the contemplation of all he had done. *Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may*

glorify thee. I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. Here was no recollection of neglected duty. It was not this, therefore, which embittered the hour of death.

3. When one has no confidence of the soul's immortality, and is dying in a state of uncertainty in relation to a future world, death will be dreadful. Then the soul is haunted with gloomy apprehensions. One is dying, but what is it to die? All is uncertain. One is leaving the world, but whither is he going? Perhaps to non-existence, perhaps to Acheron—*perhaps*, what an awful word to a dying man! To exist no longer, to fall into annihilation! Nature shudders at the word! Our love of existence fills us with an inward horror of "falling into nought."

But had Jesus Christ this horror? Was he in doubt of future existence? and was it the dread of annihilation that filled him with gloom? Far from this. He possessed an unshaken confidence, not only that he himself should rise from the dead, but that *all* that were in *their graves should hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth.* He it was that *brought life and immortality to* LIGHT, and declared himself *the resurrection and the life.* He knew he had *power to lay down his life, and power to take it again.*

4. When one dies with a guilty conscience, and is haunted in his dying hours with fears of judgment, and dreadful forebodings of vengeance in the world to come, death will be a most awful thing. Crimes, long forgotten, will come up to mind (for memory is faithful at such an hour); days, and months, and years of iniquity will be recollected; offers of pardon rejected, peace refused, grace trifled with, salvation slighted, will come over the

soul like the maledictions that blast. And while the past is fertile in fears, the future is no less so. What is before the guilty mortal? A throne of judgment, an offended, insulted, avenging God, stores of wrath, and flames of everlasting torment. These surely might terrify any man when he came to die.

But was this the source of the agony of Christ? (I ask it with reverence, and only for the purpose of leading you on to a profitable conclusion.) No, he *knew no sin, and in him the Father was well pleased.* If any one ever anticipated felicity in the world to come, surely it was Jesus, who, *for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.*

5. And lastly, when, from attachment to life or from any other reason, one is unwilling to die, the day of death will be dreadful. But this was not the case with Jesus Christ. He came into the world to suffer, and he was willing to be offered up. *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.* Here was no unwillingness to die. It was not this that caused the complaint of our text.

We find, therefore, in none of the things which can be supposed to make death dreadful, anything applicable to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died in more than usual mournfulness and gloom, and we find no explanation of the mystery.

What, then, could it be that caused this agony? Was it the taunts, the jeers of the rabble? No, these he had met. Was it the bloody scourge? No, this he had endured. Was it the sight of that Golgotha, that common charnel-house, where the bones and skulls of

the dead were piled together lest any should touch them and be polluted, and where he had been taken, that when he was dead he might be added to the pile? No, he knew that would not be his grave, and that his body *should not see corruption.* Was it the darkness which veiled the heavens? No, this was clearing away when Jesus Christ uttered this exclamation.

II. We have here, then, a mystery. We find not why Jesus Christ should be so mournful in the day of death. Let us throw as much light across it as we are able.

We would not be understood to say that the circumstances of the death of Jesus did not increase his agony. The manner of his death was a most painful one, and the cruelty and insults of those who crucified him must have added to his sufferings. But all this is quite insufficient to explain the mystery. Others have endured all this and more, and yet have died with more composure than Jesus Christ. We might point you to many a victim of torment—we might bring up before you a whole army of martyrs—lead you through the history of persecution from the days of Stephen down to those of Cranmer, and you would find no one who seems to have died in such agony as this.

And why is it that a mere man, a sinful creature, shall bear the torments of cruelty, and a death of violence, with more calmness than the holy Jesus? Why is it that one with just such a body and soul as Jesus had, subject to the same pains of body, should be more capable of meeting death with calmness?

There is one explanation of this mystery, and there is but one—i. e., *his soul was made an offering for sin.* The

iniquities of a world were laid upon him; and when he utters the exclamation of the text, indicative of so much distress, it is not because his body was in torment, merely; it is not simply because he was enduring all the bodily pain of which his frame was capable; nor simply because he was dying as a guilty malefactor, and insulted and tormented with all the malignity of cruel hate. No, no; *why hast thou forsaken me?* is the burden of his groaning. The wrath of God lay heavy on his soul; the Father had *forsaken* him; he was enduring the righteous displeasure of an angry God, and bearing the punishment of a guilty world. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him*, that *by his stripes we* might be *healed. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree.*

This seems to have been the worst of his misery. The Father had *forsaken* him. At other times he had been sustained under his trials. When he was in the wilderness, *angels ministered unto him;* when he agonized in the Garden, an angel from heaven appeared, *strengthening him.* But now all this was withdrawn, the heavens were shut up, and the wrath of God lay heavy upon his soul. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

This, then, my hearers, is the only solution of the mystery. Jesus Christ was here *made a curse for us. God spared not his own Son; he made him to be sin for us.* He was now making satisfaction to divine justice for the *sins of the world;* and this is the reason of such unequalled anguish.

Let those who imagine that Jesus lived and died only for a perfect example, only to show us how a good man

ought to live, and how a good man can die,—let them unlock this mystery. Let them say why it is that many a man has met death with more serenity than he; why it is that martyr after martyr has braved all the torments and terrors of the most cruel death with more tranquillity than Jesus Christ; why it is that even the delicate and timid female has often stood firm where Jesus Christ must shrink.

The truth is, there is no key to this mystery but the satisfaction of the atonement. There is no reason why Jesus Christ did not die with calmness and triumph but because he suffered for our sins, and his holy soul was in bitterness under the wrath of God. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* Even the thief that died beside him, died with more composure.

We do not pretend to know precisely the feelings of Jesus Christ when he uttered this exclamation. We do not suppose there was any want of submission to the will of the Father, any feeling of murmuring, or distrust, or despair. He was not offered up unwillingly. He was no reluctant victim, dragged by violence to the altar. He chose to *lay down his life.* He came a self-devoted sacrifice, and never doubted that he should rise from the dead. But nothing is more evident than that he was here in the utmost distress of soul, and a distress which never can be accounted for, only that *his soul was made an offering for sin.*

III. There are mysteries here which we are unable to explore. Let us learn to adore the matchless wisdom and mercy of our God.

We cannot tell you how it is that a holy being who knew no sin, could suffer on account of it, and deliver the guilty sinner from its punishment. We know not

how it can be, for God has not told us; we know *that* it can be, for God has revealed it. Adore, then, the matchless wisdom of God in the atonement of Jesus. Let faith believe God. Jesus died that we might live.

We cannot tell you how it is that a God of justice and holiness can, consistently with these attributes, inflict punishment upon the innocent Saviour, and pardon the guilty sinner that believes in him. We know that he does so, and this is our only hope of heaven. Adore the wisdom of God, devising this mystery for the redemption of the soul. Let faith rest assured that *God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*

We know not in what manner the divine nature was united to the human in the person of Jesus Christ, for, says St. Paul, *Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.* Learn to be humble before this *mystery of godliness*, and lean your souls upon this *God manifest in the flesh!* He came in your own nature. In his person God and man met. He can sympathize with Jehovah on the throne, and with the poorest Lazarus that dies in his sores. Our interests are safe in his hands.

Do not expect us to explain to you *how* the sufferings of Jesus Christ could honor the Law of God, since the Law condemned the guilty, and *he* was innocent. We only know he took our place and died for us, and the dignity and innocence of the victim gave an infinite value to his atonement. Adore the mystery you cannot fathom, and trust the mercy that delivers you from the curse.

Do not expect us to explain how the Father, who *delighted in the Son*, could, at such a time as this,

when he was *lifted up* on the Cross, when he was torn and mangled and tormented, and enduring all the agonies of death, take away the light of his countenance, and add tenfold bitterness to the woes of him *in whom his soul was well pleased.*

All these are mysteries into which we have no power to enter. Here are the depths of the wisdom of the Eternal, the unfathomable abysses of God. The Jew here finds a *stumbling-block*, and the Greek cries out, *Foolishness;* but angels, sensible that here is a most glorious display of the Godhead, *desire to look into* those mysteries.

IV. And what can we desire for you but that which St. Paul desired for the Colossians—that you find comfort in these mysteries, that *your hearts might be knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the* MYSTERY *of God and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are* HID (a mystery still, you perceive) *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* What more can we ask of you than to cast your sins and your souls into the hands of Jesus Christ, to draw from the fulness of his grace, to rest on the sufficiency of his sacrifice, to honor him with the tenderness of your repentance, the fervor of your love, and the confidence of your faith?

Have you seen him hanging on the Cross, given up to the hatred of his foes, and struggling with the powers of darkness? It was that he might satisfy divine justice for you—that he might bear the wrath of heaven, to deliver your soul from the pit.

Have you heard him under the preëminent pains of death, when abandoned of heaven and suffering under the displeasure of his Father, (not against himself, but

against the sins of men,) mourning that he was *forsaken?* it was because your sins were laid upon Him.

Have you seen him, enduring such agonies as none other ever felt? it was that he might triumph as he died, —that he might *spoil principalities and powers*, and vanquish death for you.

Believer, are you weak and sinful? Do you find your soul sad, and glooms and fears gathering around you? Learn, in what Christ suffered, how much God loved your soul. How *can* you despair? What more demonstration do you want that heaven has mercy for you? What can there be in infinite justice to make you fear, when you see the Infinite One has wailed under it, and suffered all it could ask? Resting on Jesus Christ, you will never sink. *Be not afraid: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.*

There is something awful in contemplating the agonies of a dying Saviour, but it is joyous to gather hopes from his death. Man was in the hopeless bondage of sin. Jesus hath paid the ransom, the Father hath accepted it, and we hope the Holy Ghost hath sealed it on your souls. And nothing—no, nothing—can ever deprive you of the smiles of your God and the love of your Saviour, while you live upon his fulness and trust his grace. He died that you might live; he suffered that you might be free; he agonized that you might rejoice.

Here, then, preparing for the solemnities of to-day, mourn that you are sinners, but rejoice that you are redeemed. Here deepen the contrition of your repentance, add fervor to your love, gain strength for your faith. Here come to swear allegiance to Jesus, come to bathe your soul in blood. Adore the mysteries of

redemption, and seal your spirit for heaven. Come to the Table of your Saviour, remembering that he died for you; come, penitent, humble, believing; come, praying for the Holy Spirit to seal you to the day of redemption.

Doubtless you will have trials in your life of religion but fear not! the blessed Jesus will take care of you. *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* But if you would have these benefits, you must live nigh to him; you must learn to lean on his bosom like St. John; you must listen and weep, like Mary, at his feet; and you must leave the world and go after him. Other friends may forsake you, but Christ never will. He will be with you in joy and sorrow; he will go with you down to the borders of the grave, and when you are covered over in its bosom he will set his seal upon it that you are his. But remember, if you would be his *then*, you must be his *now*. Give yourselves wholly to Jesus Christ, and ratify before high heaven your covenant between God and your soul.

Followers of Christ! you come to celebrate his death. He died for you. The eternal Son, the incarnate Word, the second person in the Godhead, undertook for your redemption. He took your nature; and that nature, sustained by his divinity, suffered for you. Is it not enough? enough for your souls, enough for divine justice, enough for heaven and for hell? His holy soul was sorrowful, that you might rejoice. Will you not come, then, to his Table, uttering in the fulness of your hearts, *We love him because he first loved us?* Come freely! come in welcome! come to receive all that your souls need or your souls can have!

Come to gain strength to sing, as you sink in death, *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ*

—And then you shall enter into heaven. You shall see Christ on his throne of glory. A redeemed sinner, you shall join in the anthem of the hundred and forty-four thousand, *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

But when I look over this assembly, an unutterable sadness oppresses me. I see here some whom I am afraid will never see heaven. Some of you have not turned to Christ, and now you are going to trample *his blood under foot.* What shall I say to you? I hoped, before the account of another year's ministry was sealed up for the day when I shall stand before God, to have been permitted to welcome many of you to his Table. But that year's ministry is closed, and you have not been profited by it. You and I must soon meet elsewhere. We shall stand before God. In view of that solemn day, my beloved friends, let me beseech you once more to take shelter in the Son of God. You need not go down to hell. I am afraid you will. You are flinging away your life, your days of grace. Let me plead with you to begin a new course. Seek God. Begin now. Consecrate the last moments of the expiring year to earnest prayer for your own souls; and if you begin another, begin it and end it with God, lest it should be better for you that you had never been born!

V.

The Sacrament a Feast of Alliance.

"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. xi. 26.

THAT ordinance whose design is somewhat developed in these words, is one of the most significant institutions among mankind. It is no unmeaning ceremony, deriving its effect from ostentation and the glare of outward exhibition, which often hold a strong influence over the minds of the multitude; nor does it depend for its effect on the superstitious principles of human nature, which always find attractions in some half-veiled mystery. It is at once simple and significant. All is plain and open. The institution stands before us in unobscured significance, and, unlike the mysteries of the ancient heathen, it seeks no retirement, nor strives, like them, to perpetuate its existence by the magnifying power of superstition, and the prying inquisitiveness of unsatisfied curiosity. Unlike, also, to some modern institutions, it makes no vainglorious boasts of hidden wonders, nor holds its empire over the mind by the combined influence of pretended mysteries, and the vain promise of some future disclosure. It is precisely

what it pretends to be: a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ. *This do in remembrance of me. . . . For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* Here is the plain object of the institution. Here is no disguise drawn around it. The disciple who approaches the Lord's table cannot but understand the main intention of the ordinance. He comes as the humble disciple of his crucified Lord, to testify his attachment to him. He comes to celebrate the dying love of Jesus; to renew his covenant with him, and pledge his fidelity over the consecrated emblems of his death. He comes to hold communion with God, as friend meets friend, and open his heart to the joys of a wondrous forgiveness and a matchless love.

All these ideas are included in the ordinance which *shews the Lord's death*. It is, therefore, no less significant than plain.

But it is peculiarly instructive. How can it be otherwise when we trace its history, and enter into its significance? How can we avoid receiving instruction when we travel back over the lapse of ages, and take our stand by that Table where Jesus instituted the Supper, and abolished the passover which preceded it? When we there behold the Son of man, a Jew by birth and a Jew by education, (acting with the simple majesty which always marked his character,) without publicity, and associated with a mere handful of his nation, abolishing one of the most solemn institutions of a whole people, and placing in its stead the ordinance we now celebrate, how can we avoid gathering instruction from the significant relics of the institution he swept aside? and how can we avoid the lesson enforced by

the manner of his doing it? And when we go further back, tracing the feast of the passover through ages of Jewish glory and Jewish depression, noting its solemnities among the worshipping hosts of Israel that came up in faith to the holy hill; and tracing its observance from age to age, back through the reign of kings, and the rule of judges and prophets and patriarchs, till we have seen it in the vales of Judea, till we have seen it on the sands of the desert, at the foot of Mount Sinai, and, finally, in its Egyptian cradle, where the blood on the door-posts disarmed the destroying angel—when we do all this, how can we avoid gathering instruction, and gaining confidence in the promises of God?

And we might go still further back; we might mark the offering of significant sacrifices, typical of the sacrifice of Christ, as remote as the days of Abraham, and even of Abel. We might retire from the records of sacred writ, and notice the heathen nations all possessing the custom of offering sacrifice to their deities, and ask why it is that this custom (which the light of nature surely cannot prompt) has been so universal. Thus, from the history of heathenism we might adduce a proof of the divinity of our religion.

But it is in the *significance* of our sacrament that we must find the most essential instruction. And if we investigate its significance, we find it embracing the ideas of a *covenant*, a *seal*, an *oath*, and a *feast*.

It is a *covenant*. The contracting parties are the great God of heaven, and the poor sinful creature to whose weakness he condescends. With the sinner, the revolted subject, the guilty violator of his holy law, the gracious Jehovah enters into articles of agreement which secure to him indemnity for offences, and the eternal joys of

heaven. These, then, are the most powerful motives to maintain this covenant inviolate. Here are strong arguments to induce the dying creature to examine the articles of this covenant, and ascertain on what conditions he can have *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, when the *earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved.* Methinks if Christians would more frequently dwell upon this idea of the sacramental feast, and examine more frequently the stipulations they have entered into with that covenant-keeping and eternal God, we should find less need to admonish, *Be not conformed to this world.*

It is a *seal.* The covenant is *ordered in all things and sure.* When it is made, it is ratified and sealed. The Lord's Supper is the great seal, of Jesus Christ's own devising, to the covenant of grace. The death of Christ is the image it wears—the love of Christ is the impression it leaves.

It is an *oath.* The covenant is not simply made and sealed, but its observance is bound upon you by an oath. You swear fidelity to its conditions. This is another idea of this sacrament, and another strong reason for your examining into the articles to which you have sworn, lest you be found false to your oath, and guilty of perjury to the eternal God.

It is a *feast.* This is the last idea, and the one under which we design to contemplate the ordinance this morning. The covenant is not only made and sealed and sworn to, but the parties meet at one common board, to signify the intimacy of the union which they have formed, and the familiarity (if I may so express it) of their intercourse with one another.

All these ideas are included in this memorial of our

crucified Saviour; and the full explanation of this memorial, therefore, would be most instructive to the Christian.

But we must confine ourselves to one of these ideas, and that one is most prominently presented in our text. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death.* The sacrament is here presented under the idea of a feast. This idea,

I. Must be explained.
II. It must be limited.
III. It must be justified.
IV. It must be improved.

These four articles form the outline of our discourse. But while we dwell on the institution under the idea of friendship and familiarity, we hope you will not forget the other ideas it includes. Let not this idea of condescension and intimacy impair your veneration for that God who thus stoops to your weakness.

This sacrament is a feast.

I. This idea of the sacrament must be explained. The language in which this sacrament is often spoken of is familiar to you all. It is called the *Lord's supper;* those who partake of it are said to sit down at the Table of the Lord, to *eat and drink* in his presence, to *eat his body and drink his blood.* It is often denominated a *feast,* and our text speaks of it as *eating and drinking,* as a manifestation of the death of our Saviour.

These expressions are figurative, and designed to express our living by faith in his fulness, and the remission of our sins by his blood. They compel us, therefore, to regard Jesus Christ as something more than our great *example* in righteousness and holy living. He is our example, indeed, and it is the solemn duty of the Chris-

tian to imitate him in all things where imitation can be practised, and is commanded. But this is not all. The Christian is to regard his Saviour as the fulness on which he lives, the strength in which he acts, the fountain of his spiritual existence, the *bread of life*. Nourished by this, the Christian will be strong, the pulse of life will beat with a healthful stroke, and the currents of life will flow smoothly and undisturbed. Without this, he will languish and die. If he attempt to live for a single day without being strengthened by the grace of his Saviour, he will not live for Christ, nor for heaven. He has no sufficiency in himself, and whenever he grows up toward the stature of perfection, he grows only because he is fed, like the ancient Hebrews in the wilderness, with *bread from heaven*.

We are too apt to think (after we have once indulged the hope that we are born again) that we are in no danger of mournful failure; we imagine we shall grow and prosper of course. We forget the fountain from which we must drink, and the storehouse whose supplies we need. The Christian has no more sufficiency to *prosper* in holy life, than he has to implant the principle at first in his soul. And this feast would teach him that all his sufficiency is in the grace of Jesus Christ, and that he should always be seeking it there. And that man who ceases to draw from this fountain, who, having obtained a hope in Christ, and joined himself to the people of God, thinks himself secure of heaven; that man whose expectations of eternal life are based on what Jesus Christ *has* done for him, entirely aside from what Jesus Christ *is* doing; that man whose soul is not strengthened daily by the *author and finisher of faith*, has little reason to suppose he was *ever* a child of grace. Jesus Christ

is not only the *Alpha* but the *Omega*, not only the *beginning* but the *end*. And this feast would teach us the necessity of *always*, not *occasionally*, gaining strength and life from him.

This feast is one of reconciliation, of friendship, and of union.

Of *reconciliation*. Those who come to this board are those reconciled to God by the death of Christ. Once they were enemies to God *by wicked works*, but now they are reconciled by the *death of his Son*. The great God has sent forth ambassadors to proclaim the conditions of peace, and beseech men to be reconciled to him; and some have accepted the conditions. They have entered into covenant with their Maker,—have sworn to be for him and not for another; they have sealed the articles of reconciliation, and now they are sitting down at his board as reconciled friends.

It is a feast of *friendship*. Those who meet here meet as the friends of one another and of their common Master. It is not those who are at variance, but those whose hearts are bound together in feelings of peace and amity, that find delight in gathering around the same table. This feast was intended to gratify and foster the high friendships of the Christian heart. Here Jesus Christ would have his disciples meet, as the followers of a common Master and the heirs of a common heaven. And here, *if any man will open*, he will himself *come in and sup with him*, as friend meets friend. At this ordinance, heart should open to heart, love respond to love, and every feeling of distrust and discord be lost in the kindness of the scene. Jesus condescends to meet his humble disciples, according to his promise, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you;* and the example

of his condescension and forgiveness should be imitated by those who gather at his call. If he has loved them, how ought they to love one another!

It is a feast of *union*. The great God meets us in his ordinances, to unite us to himself. Those who were *afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* They become one with him; they are united to him as the *branch is united to the vine*, and are admitted to the high privilege of being *heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.*

This is the explanation of this idea of the sacrament. But this idea must be limited.

II. Though the sacrament is a feast, we are not to forget the *nature* of it, and think ourselves at liberty to make it what we please. That it is an occasion of joy we will always insist, and that it was designed to be celebrated with feelings of love and joyful elevation I have no hesitation in believing. One whose heart is filled with the graces of the Spirit, whose bosom beats with love to Jesus, whose conscience is at peace with God, who comes to this Table, his soul buoyed above depression with the earnest of the Spirit—such a one cannot but rejoice in communion with his God. But we are to rejoice with trembling. While we delight in God's saving mercy and his renewing grace in Christ Jesus, we should hold it in mind that this feast celebrates our deliverance from death. Penitence and humility are the feelings that should temper our joy and mingle with our love. You remember the ancient Jews ate their passover with *bitter herbs*, and this was to call to mind the bitterness of Egyptian bondage. And the more modern Jews, in the celebration of their passover, have a significant and instructive ceremony. The plate containing the bread of their passover is lifted by the hands of the

whole company, and they all unite in the expression, *This is the bread of poverty and affliction which our fathers did eat in Egypt.* We are not, therefore, to suppose ourselves at liberty to rejoice without repentance, when we celebrate this feast, and to make this solemn sacrament an occasion of thoughtless joy. The Corinthian church erred in this particular. They knew this was a feast, but forgot the proper limits. They supposed themselves at liberty to make it an occasion of unmingled joy, and it seems to have become with them little else than a profane feast, where they forgot, not only the solemnities it calls to mind, but the restraints of Christian sobriety. This was the occasion of that severe censure which St. Paul passes upon them when he intimates that they had entirely perverted the intention of the ordinance, and tells them, *when they came together, it was not to eat the Lord's supper.* We are to keep it in mind, therefore, that this idea of the sacrament has its limits. It is a feast, but it is a *solemn* feast.

This will still further appear when we point out another limit of this idea. It is a feast, but who are those that partake? All men are accustomed to think and speak of this sacrament as the assembling of friends to sit down at a common board. But another idea, which we shall spread before you under our third division, is included in this ordinance, and gives us another limitation of this meaning of the sacrament. That idea is, that the eternal God comes down to this Table. (It is not easy, my hearers, to speak of the astonishing condescension of the great Jehovah in such a manner as not to be in danger of diminishing your reverence. When God in some measure lays aside the aspect of the Deity, and in condescension to our weak

ness, deals with us as man with man, we are in danger of losing sight of that infinite distance which separates us from him. Even when he enters into *covenant* with us, we are apt to forget his Deity on account of his condescension. How much more, when he welcomes us at a feast, when he strips himself, as it were, of his Deity, and comes down to meet us as our friend. But let us beware of entertaining too familiar ideas of Jehovah, and abusing his wonderful condescension to the forgetfulness of his awful greatness.)

We said that this feast is the spot where the eternal God meets those with whom he enters into covenant. This fact, then, must give to this idea of a feast a most impressive limit. We meet, not simply one another—not merely those who are mortals like ourselves—but the eternal Jehovah. This feast was designed to represent the intimate union and friendship which the great Jehovah would maintain with his people. Here, then, we find a limit to the idea, which we ought always to bear in mind. It is not a feast where we assemble with our equals merely, but where the everlasting God condescends to meet us as our friend. This is the nature of our sacrament. When we speak of it as a feast, this is the idea we ought always to attach to it.

III. But this idea must be justified. This is the third topic of our discourse.

All are accustomed to regard this ordinance as the meeting of common friends at the Table of their common Master. But the other idea which we have introduced is not so familiar. However, we have no doubt you will perceive its propriety and truth.

The sacrament we celebrate is, you know, a feast of sacrifice. Jesus Christ, the great atoning sacrifice for

the sins of a world, is the offered victim. Now, what is the idea of a feast of sacrifice? We say it is that the God who is honored by the sacrifice holds intercourse with those who come to the sacrificial feast, as intimate as the intercourse of those "friends who eat together at the same table." This is the original and true import of a feast of sacrifice. The various nations of the ancient world all had this idea, and we find it too prominent in their history to be overlooked. It entered into the alliances that men made with one another, and those they made with the Deity. When they entered into treaties, or covenants, or alliances with one another, when warring nations made peace, they slew victims, prepared a common table, and sat down together at their repast, to signify the intimacy of their union. This was the meaning of every feast of sacrifice. The contracting parties were represented by it as intimately connected as the friends who are sheltered by the same roof, and fed from the same table. If these parties were mere men, then it was men simply who ate of the victims immolated. If one of the parties was divine, then—if the alliance formed was an alliance made between man and his God—his God was to be a partaker of the victim.

We find this idea of a covenanting feast both in profane and sacred history.

The pagans who ate the flesh of their sacrifices, called their repast a feasting with the gods. Homer tells us that Jupiter came down to the Ethiopians to a feast which they had prepared for him, and that he was accompanied by all the gods. He introduces one of his personages declaring "The gods become visible when we sacrifice hecatombs to them; they keep the festival

with us, and are seated by us at the same table." He tells us that Agamemnon sacrificed an ox to Jove, invited the flower of his army to the feast, and the offering was accepted.

The same idea is taught abundantly in the sacred scriptures, sometimes directly, and at others by inference, or evidently implied. Moses, speaking of the priesthood, says: "*They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer.* Here we have the plain language, *the bread of God.* The same idea is included in almost all the offerings of the altar. A part was eaten by the priests, a part given to the people, and a part consumed by fire. This last was considered as the part of God, and the whole ordinance was one of alliance or covenant—one of friendship, of union.

This explanation will unfold to us the meaning of *eating* and *drinking*, sometimes spoken of in such connection that we are not apt to understand their import. When Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel went up the mount before the promulgation of the law, it is said, *they saw* the God *of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. (And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand); also they saw God, and did eat and drink.* Why *eat and drink?* Manifestly they were just contracting an alliance with Jehovah. The festival was a sacrifice, part consumed by fire, and part eaten by men.

We have not time for more proofs. Let these suffice to justify our explanation. They teach us that this is a

festival of alliance. The Lord's supper is a feast of sacrifice, just as the festivals of sacrifice among the Jews. This is the original import of all sacrifices; they bound the contracting parties as friends and brothers. And however they may have differed in some particulars, or however our festival may differ from theirs, this is one of the essential notions it includes. It represents the God of heaven as holding friendly and familiar intercourse with men, as meeting in their assemblies, as united to them in covenant, as holding with them the most endearing intercourse. Christ is the sacrifice, a sacrifice to be accepted of God and man.

IV. About to meet around his Table, improve this subject for your personal preparation.

Coming with an humble and a contrite heart, you may have the assurance of the presence, and the blessing of your God. If you can confide in the mercy of God through this great sacrifice, and take upon yourselves the conditions of the covenant, this Table of the Lord will not be approached in vain. Here, God himself condescends to meet you. He lays aside the terrors of majesty in which he is sometimes robed, to represent himself as your friend and brother. He enters into covenant with you. He offers strength to your weakness, pardon for your sins, grace to help and hope to cheer. He unites himself to you to be your constant ally, to defend you from your foes, to soothe you in your sorrows, to be your constant companion as you travel through this vale of tears. Here he appears in all the attractions of his grace, with all the gifts of his Spirit, and all the demonstrations of his love.

Let this feast, then, be a source of consolation to the soul which can enter into covenant with God. If you

can renounce your sins; if you can give yourself up to be for Christ and not for another; if you can say to him, over these august symbols of his sufferings, that you will renounce the world and its deceitful pleasures for the service of him who has bought you with his blood,—he will meet you as your friend; he will say, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

Aye, humble penitent, this festival is for your joy. Here we would have you feel the full extent of your felicity, and find your heart kindling with higher and holier love as you call to mind the benefits and condescending mercy of your God. He will listen to the sigh that heaves your bosom as you confess your sins. He will gather the tears of your penitence, and preserve in heaven your prayers among the vials of his odors. As *you eat this bread and drink this cup*, he will say to you, *I am the bread of life—the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.* And he will send you from his Table cheered and comforted.

But are there not some about to approach this board to whom he will say, *Who hath required this at your hands?* Recollect, heedless man, you are dealing with the Deity. If he does represent himself coming into these assemblies as the friend and guest and ally of his people, he does not come to give countenance to the thoughtless, nor to speak peace to the ungodly. The great God with whom we covenant can penetrate the deepest recesses of every heart. Before him the hypocrite is unmasked, the worldling has no disguise, and the heart which finds its usual pleasures in scenes of thoughtless merriment uncountenanced by this Bible and unsanctioned by this Saviour, is open to his view. Such a heart—a heart still retaining the savor of its ungodly

pleasures, where Christianity must lose its character and sink itself in the world, is in no mood for entering into this feast. The spirit of the world still lingers around it, and the spirit of this festival can find no admission. Such a heart can never enter into this friendly alliance, for it is bound to the pleasures of carnality. The eye of God is upon it, and repentance alone can avert the curse.

But those who take no pleasure in ungodliness may find in this feast sweet intercourse with heaven. Those who have no joys so dear that they will not renounce them, no pleasures so enchanting that they will not resist them, no passion so fond that they will not sacrifice it, whenever the interest of their covenanting Saviour demands,—*those* are the persons who can enter into the spirit of this festival, and realize its joys and its benefits.

And this is the meaning of this feast. It is a festival of alliance between the sinner and his God. On the one hand, he devotes to God himself and all he has; he renounces the world and its vanities; he denies himself and lives for his God. On the other hand, God condescends to meet him with his grace, his pardon, his peace; he gives him joy in his countenance, and promises to him a fulness of joy hereafter. In one word, he gives him all the benefits of that Saviour in whom dwells all *the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* And, in order to annihilate the distance between the frail creature and his God, so that this creature may enjoy communion with him, Jesus Christ clothes himself in our nature, saying, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren.*

Here, then, we have the key to unlock the treasury of grace. Let us give ourselves to Jesus Christ, and receive from his fulness in return.

Children of God! you are about to assemble around your Father's Table. It becomes you to have your hearts open to his grace, and confiding in his love. Though Jesus Christ, on the mount of crucifixion, offered up the last sacrifice for sins, yet the holy Supper is properly considered a feast of sacrifice. In that Supper, you meet God as *reconciled by the death of his Son.* You and your Maker were enemies. On *your* part, your sins made you fearful, and your hearts were estranged from the love of a holy Law and a holy God. On his part, he was *angry with the wicked*, the sword of justice glittered in his hand, lightnings flashed, and thunders rolled around his throne! There came a voice, *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow.* Jesus Christ received the blow, God accepted the sacrifice, and you are now openly to profess that you accept it also. Come, then, meet your reconciled God as friend meets friend when, after sad estrangement, feelings of enmity are hushed, and they rush to the embraces of each other's love. God—the infinite God—is as ready to meet you in friendship, as you can be to meet him. Be not afraid. Honor him with your confidence. If you accept Jesus Christ as your sacrifice, you need not be afraid of sin, of Satan, of God's justice, of death, of hell;—*all things are yours: for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

VI.

The Lord's Supper a Covenant.

"And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."—Ex. xxiv. 6–8.

IT is scarcely more lamentable than it is common, that we are benefited too little by the institutions of the Lord. The methods in which God speaks to us are greatly varied, and they are all designed to increase our strength for his service, and add to our felicity in serving him. He addresses us in the works of his fingers—in the heavens that sparkle with his glories, and the earth that smiles with his goodness. He speaks to us in his providence. The "rolling year" presents to our notice the successive footsteps of the Deity, and we can not but recognize that extensive goodness which *hears the young ravens cry*, and "tempers the breeze to the shorn lamb." He speaks to us in his Word;—and *here* we behold the highest effort of Omnipotence (if we may

so express it) for the good of man. All that he has here spread before us testifies his divine compassion. *To save the sinner* is the sole, great object of the Holy Word. To accomplish this we have all these doctrines and instructions and exhortations and promises; all this history and biography, spreading before us the record of ages and the lives of saints; all these institutions of Sabbaths and sanctuaries, placing before us the very pledges of Jehovah; and these sacraments writing out those pledges in the blood of Jesus. And after all, how small, sometimes, is the benefit we derive from all this! Have you not *wondered*, Christian, ah! and *mourned* too, to find yourself so little profited, even by the solemn ordinance which spreads before you the sacrifice of the Son of God? Have you not sometimes wept over these consecrated symbols, and felt that your heart was more for heaven; and yet, in a short time, the feeling passed away, and you were sad—sad with the conviction that even this holy ordinance had been too profitless to your heart?

The design of this solemn ordinance is, to cherish and cultivate the graces of the Christian. God would have us grow better by the ordinances he has established, and become stronger in faith, and more meek, and holy, and happy, by meeting at his Table. And it is very unfortunate for us if we do not gain these benefits. It is a sad discovery which the Christian makes, when he finds himself no stronger in grace, year after year. How mournfully the thought comes over the heart, when he reflects: "Time after time I have been at the Lord's Table, and it is all lost upon me. Communion-season after communion-season has passed away, and I have made no advances. Death is still as dreadful; the part-

ing with this world is just as severe; the grave, the judgment, eternity, are just as awful!" These are sad reflections,—and yet, if you were to die to-night, perhaps you would be forced to make them; perhaps you would be compelled to confess that your communion with Jesus Christ, at his Table, had done you but too little good.

My dear friends, these seasons ought not to be lost upon us. They ought to increase our Christian virtues, and prepare us for more fidelity and delight in the service of our Master, and more composure and joy when our Master calls us hence. Probably the great reason *why* we are not more profited by these solemn occasions, is our inadequate ideas of the ordinance we celebrate. We are apt to have very imperfect conceptions of the *nature* of this sacrament, and therefore it does not hold over us the strong influence it might do. Hence, to correct this evil, we must correct our conceptions; we must enter into the nature of the ordinance; we must put it to our own hearts, *what we are doing* when we come to the Table of the Lord.

This ordinance may be contemplated from different points of view. Christ calls us to contemplate it as a *covenant* between the Christian and his God.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a *covenant;* and if we can spread before you the entire meaning of that covenant, you will be more likely to derive advantage from the observance of it. In order to do this we go back, for the sake of a full example, to the covenant which God made with the children of Israel. We will,

I. Show that the covenant which God made with the Israelites was essentially the same as that which he makes with us.

II. Consider the circumstances under which it was made.

III. The nature of it.
IV. Its voluntary pledge.
V. Its extensive obligation.
VI. Its bloody seal.

I. We must show you that the covenant which God made with the Jews is in substance the same as that which he makes with Christians. We have two methods of showing this: the first, from the nature of the case; and the second, from the language of the scriptures.

1. From the nature of the case. The Israelites were the same, by nature, as we are. They possessed the same wickedness of heart, the same perversity of disposition; and they needed the same pardon and sanctification and redemption. They were dealing with the same God, receiving the same promises of grace, and aiming at the same heaven. They were under the same incapacity of atoning for sin, the same inability of attaining heaven by their own goodness. Hence, what the unchangeable Jehovah required of them, he must, in substance, require of us. Religion now is what it ever has been. Some of the circumstances may be different, but the substance is the same. The Jews were looking forward to a Saviour to come. We are looking to that Saviour whose blood has been already shed. But in each case there is the same reliance on the promise and grace of Jehovah. Hence, the same consecration, the same spirit of devotion, the same holiness of character, the same yielding up of self in obedience to the Almighty, is enjoined on us, as was enjoined on them. And hence, also, the covenant made with the Israelites must be essentially the same covenant, in spirituality and force, as that which God now makes with us.

We ought, perhaps, to add, that so far as the circumstances are concerned we are far more favored than they were. We have more instruction in the doctrines of redemption. We have more perfect knowledge of the victim of the covenant. We see the blood of redemption flowing from the Lamb of God, and know more perfectly what it is that *taketh away the sin of the world.* We have, therefore, more attracting views of the gracious condescension of God than he vouchsafed to afford to them. Hence, we ought to feel ourselves *more* strongly bound instead of less strongly, and have a more awful fear of violating the covenant which we make. We shall see, presently, that an inspired writer has told us so.

2. The language of the scriptures proves to us that the covenant of the Christian and the covenant of the Israelite are essentially the same. Take the proof in four distinct articles.

(*a.*) That of the Israelite embraced the same spirituality and the same Saviour. We have both these in the same text. St. Paul tells us, *They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.* And if both covenants embrace the same Saviour and the same spirituality, they must be essentially the same, differing only in circumstances.

(*b.*) The Israelites are held up to us as monitory examples of sinning against the same Saviour, which could not be proper if they were under the articles of a different covenant. St. Paul tells us, (in the same chapter,) *With many of them, God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* And then he tells us,

These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And then he goes on to caution us in several particulars of their example, and among the rest, *Neither let us tempt* CHRIST —(the same Saviour you perceive)—*as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* If the Israelites are proper examples of monition to us, they must have been under a covenant essentially the same, differing only in circumstances.

(*c.*) Again: The Israelites had the same promises that we have, for St. Paul tells us that they, *not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them.* And if their faith rested upon the same promises, it must have been the same kind of faith as ours; and the covenant which contained the promises, as an inducement to faith, must have been the same covenant, differing only in circumstances.

(*d.*) Again: Our covenant enjoins fidelity, by the same sanctions; only, an intensity of these sanctions is pressing upon us by reason of our better circumstances. St. Paul says: *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* Here it is *intimated* that our violation of the covenant will more awfully expose us. Notice the same sanction and the like exposure, where St. Paul compares the condition of the Israelites with the condition of those under the gospel. He says: *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth* MUCH MORE (notice these words) *shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.* Here it is not

barely intimated, but plainly *declared*, that our violation of the covenant will more awfully expose us. We have, therefore, the same sanctions as the Israelite had.

We conclude, then, since the covenant of the Israelites embraced the same spirituality and the same Saviour, —since the violators of it are presented as monitory examples to us,—since their covenant contained the same promises (based, you will notice, on the same Saviour),—since it was urged by the same sanctions, and thus bound its subjects to the same fidelity and obedience;—since in all these things the Israelitish covenant was the same as ours, it must have been essentially the same covenant, differing only in circumstances. Our principle, therefore, is established, that the two covenants are substantially the same.

The circumstances in which they differ are nothing material. They result, not from the nature of the case, but from the ages of the world. The Israelite lived in an age when the Victim of the covenant was not yet slain. Jesus Christ had not yet died; and as a consequence of this, the Jew must be offering sacrifices and be attentive to other observances typical of a coming Saviour. But this has nothing to do with the essence of the covenant. The substance is the same, whether we look forward to a Saviour to come, or look back, through the lapse of ages, to one who has already atoned for the sins of a world. The *sanction* only is varied by the variation of circumstances. We have more light than the Israelite, and therefore we shall be more criminal if we violate our covenant engagements. This is the reason why we alleged that we ought to have a more awful fear. This is the reason why St. Paul says, MUCH MORE *shall not we escape, if we turn*

away from him that speaketh from heaven. We shall be, this afternoon, in more solemn circumstances than were the Israelites at Sinai.

We have been the more particular in this article, because we believe many Christians mistake the nature of their covenant, not believing that a violation of it *now* is so awful a sin as it was with the Israelites. But we have seen it to be more awful. We have heard the apostle's strong language, *Much more shall not we escape!*

II. We enter upon the consideration of the circumstances under which the covenant was made. These were of a most interesting kind. The Israelites had been delivered from the power of the Egyptians by the hand of the Almighty, and conducted away to a barren wilderness. They had seen many proofs of God's power, and had been the subjects of miraculous deliverances. The destroying angel that smote the first-born of Egypt, had passed harmless by their dwellings, guarded by the hallowed blood that was sprinkled upon their doorposts. The Red Sea had rolled back his waves to afford them a passage, and again heaved in his billows upon the pursuing host. The Angel of God and the pillar of cloud that went before them, had retired as the foe approached, and stood, the emblem of Omnipotence, between God's chosen and their foes. The Angel of the Covenant, clothed in a cloud by day and in fire by night, had accompanied them, week after week. Bread had come down from heaven; waters had gushed from the smitten rock; and Joshua had routed the hosts of Amalek only when Moses, on the hill-top, held up the rod of God in his hand. All these miracles they had witnessed, testifying at once the power and the goodness of their Deliverer.

But they had not yet entered the promised land. For fifty days they had been traversing the desert, and they were now encamped at the foot of Sinai. Moses had been on the awful mount, in converse with the Deity. He had received the articles of the covenant which was now to be ratified, the requirements which the Almighty made, and the blessings which he promised; and had come down from the mountain and written them in a book. He was acting as a mediator between his God and the hosts of Israel; or perhaps we should rather say, he was the messenger of God to present to them the covenant they were about to receive. He had just built an altar at the foot of the mount, and, at a little distance, twelve pillars: the altar, to represent the Almighty in the league they were forming, and to indicate the method in which the sinner may approach him; the twelve pillars, to represent the twelve tribes who were entering into solemn covenant with God. Sacrifices were now offered; and, in the space between the altar and the mount of God on the one hand, and the pillars and the people of Israel on the other, moved Moses,—at once the herald of God and the hope of man. The blood of the sacrifices and the book of the covenant were in his hand. Behind him was the mount, still covered with the cloud, (the symbol of the Deity,) and sending up its smoke from amid the *thick darkness where God was.* Before him were the hosts of Israel, waiting to receive or to reject the covenant of God. What an awful moment! God to be an enemy, or to be a friend! Will they receive, or will they reject the covenant of God? Alas! my brethren, does not our observation teach us that men have no fondness for alliance with heaven? When we come here to renew our covenant,

how many of our friends are absent! how limited the number that enter into league with heaven!

III. But Moses proceeded in his ministrations; and the proceeding will instruct us in the nature of the covenant.

Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. I wish you to notice this division of the blood: it is the very key to the nature of the covenant. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, and the altar was here the representative of God: the sprinkling of it signified that *he* was ready, on his part, to ratify the covenant which Moses was presenting. The other half of the blood was reserved till the people had heard all the words of the covenant from the written record, and had testified their acceptance. (It is worthy of remark, that they had before heard it, and before accepted it; but now they were receiving it in solemn form, as it was written in a book and to be sealed with blood.) *And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people.* This was the half of the blood that had been reserved till the people had formally consented to the articles that were written in the book.

Now what is the meaning of this division of the blood, part sprinkled on the altar and part upon the people? We say, it signifies the reciprocal nature of the alliance. God made engagements to them, and the blood, sprinkled on the altar, was the seal. They made engagements to God, and the blood, sprinkled on themselves, was the seal. The contracting parties came under reciprocal engagements to one another.

Here, if I am not mistaken, we may find the correction of a very common error; an error which, probably more than all others, deprives us of the benefits of this sacred ordinance. It is no uncommon thing for Christians to come to the renewal of their covenant with very inadequate notions of its import. They come to receive the pledge of God's blessings, but not to render back the pledge of their devotion. They imagine that God is here offering them unconditional favors, and the whole design of their coming is to receive them. They come to receive the seal of pardoned sin, but not to set their seal that they will serve their Master. The consequence is, that their feelings are not affected as they would be if they had not misinterpreted this covenant. And there are those who pretend to be teachers of God's ordinances, whose instructions lead to this error. We are sometimes told that God is here only offering himself to us in his promises, and not in the least presenting requirements. Let us correct this error; and in order to do so, let us trace the reciprocity of engagement in the formation of covenants, and learn to avoid this dangerous principle.

If we enter more fully into the meaning of this division of the blood, we shall find it to contain a most awful surrendering of ourselves to the hand of vengeance, if we dare to violate the covenant that it seals.

It was the practice of the Chaldeans, when they were contracting alliances among themselves or with the neighboring nations, to sacrifice the victims, divide them into parts, and place those parts opposite to one another, leaving a space between them. The contracting parties then passed through the space between the parts of the divided victims, solemnly repeating at the same time,

Let it not thus be done unto us. By this ceremony they consented to be slain, as the victims had been, if they should be unfaithful to their agreement. This is the most ancient account we have, and it places before us the exact meaning of this division of blood. We have other instances of this nature, and though the history of the transaction is less full, the significance is still apparent. In Jeremiah xxxiv. we have the same rite. *Thus saith the Lord: I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof,—the princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the hands of their enemies.* Here, evidently, was the sacrifice cut into pieces; and the people took on themselves the covenant by passing between the parts. Hence comes the scripture phrase, to *enter* into covenant. It is not always called *forming* or *making* a covenant, but *entering* into covenant, because they passed between the parts of the divided victim. We find something of the same kind as early as the days of Abraham. God directed him (when he was confirming his covenant) *to take a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old. And he took unto him all these, and* DIVIDED *them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another.* And afterwards, in his vision, it is said he *beheld a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces: in that same day, the Lord made a* COVENANT *with Abraham.*

Indeed, this idea of a covenant, and this method of entering into covenant by the division of the sacrificed

victim, are so essential to the thing itself that it enters into the very language;—the Hebrew word for "covenant" signifies a thing *cut* or *divided.*

We trace the same idea of a covenant among other nations. To *strike* a covenant is the common phraseology of the Latins, because in making it they struck down and divided the victim. To *cut an oath* is the common expression of the Greeks, because in taking the oath of a covenant, they cut in pieces the victim. And there is a remnant of this method of making a covenant, or taking a vow, among the Algerines of the present day. When the corsairs are in distress at sea, endangered by the violence of a storm, or chased by some enemy's vessel, they light up candles in remembrance of some ancient saint, or collect money to present at his shrine. And if these measures fail and the danger increases, they sacrifice a sheep, or more than one if they think the danger very pressing. They cut the victim, after it is slain, into two parts, with all haste; and they throw one of the parts over the right and the other over the left side of the ship. In this way, they think, they have made *a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement.* Thus we see, that even among the piratical outlaws of society there is still retained something of the *manner* of *passing into* covenant.

We could overwhelm you with proof, in this article, both from sacred and profane history. We think, however, that we have already said enough to convince you of the correctness of our exposition of this division of the blood, and the meaning of it.

IV. The Almighty compels no man to enter into covenant with him. The act, on the part of the individual, is a voluntary act. God presents the plain conditions

of this covenant, and the sinner receives or rejects them, as he chooses. God does, indeed, utter his *command* that sinners should repent and walk in all the ordinances of the gospel. But if the sinner obeys, he obeys voluntarily. God does not force him to repent, does not force him to enter into covenant. He takes upon *himself*, by his own act and own desire, the covenant which God presents. You will notice this in the words of our text: *All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient;* and this promise had been made before, while the negotiation was pending, in almost the same words. We find, in chapter xix., that the people said, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.* And now, when the negotiation was come to an end, and the covenant was to be ratified and sealed, the same promise is repeated. You will notice, too, that the promise is repeated *before* the blood is sprinkled on the people. God will seal no one with the blood of the covenant who does not give this voluntary pledge.

Here, then, in our fourth article, we have a confirmation of what we said in the third, and the enforcement of the engagement by a voluntary pledge.

V. Learn the same from our fifth article: the extensive obligation of the covenant. ALL *that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.* Here is no reserve. The promise is extensive. It embraces *all* that the Lord hath said. The covenant we make with God is one that binds to obedience, and to obedience in *all* things.

Let us see if we cannot bring this subject home to ourselves by a profitable

APPLICATION [*connected with the seal.*]

We have before us the identity of the Israelites' cov

enant with our own; the circumstances under which their covenant was made; its reciprocal nature; its voluntary pledge; its extensive obligation.

These circumstances are just yours, my brethren. If you *are* Christians, in sincerity and truth, you are not yet in heaven. You have the wilderness yet to travel before you get to the promised land. You have still duties to do, trials to endure, hardships to encounter. God is offering, in this ordinance, to enter into an alliance with you, and become your guide, your strength, your friend. If you receive him as such, he will conduct you safely. Though the path you tread is rough, and the obstacles that oppose are numerous, still God is stronger than your foes, and will make even rough places smooth.

Now if you would be profited by this alliance, recollect where you are standing. You are not yet in heaven, Canaan is not yet conquered; and you have no security,—no, not even from this hallowed covenant,—that you will ever enter into rest, if you are not travelling towards it. God gives you no token that your duties are done, or that you have none to do. You are not called to enter into a covenant of idleness, but a covenant of action; and if you would receive benefit from this renewal of your league with God, you must not come to gain his permission to be idle. One reason why these seasons of alliance profit you so little is that you form mistaken notions respecting them. I put it to your own conscience, hearer: have you not sometimes come to the communion-table and taken upon you the seal of the covenant, and then felt that you were secure and had nothing to do; that God had pledged himself for your salvation, and you were safe?

But you had mistaken your covenant. One great

object of it is to bind you to obedience and fidelity; and you can not enter into covenant with God, except by a voluntary pledge of entire obedience: *all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.* This is the oath of the covenant, and God will not accept your consecration if you do not willingly pronounce it. By your taking upon you this solemn oath, God would bring you to feel yourself bound to him and his service by an additional obligation—by a voluntary pledge.

There is something in our very nature which forces us to feel more perfectly an obligation which we have acknowledged. The obligation may be as perfect without an acknowledgment as with it. It may be founded on the nature of things. It may have its enforcement by the plainest principles of justice, and come down upon us with the sanction of the mightiest authority. Yet if we have never *acknowledged* the obligation, we do not so fully realize it. All the clearness of its justice and all the power of its sanctions do not bind us so perfectly as we can be bound. It is when we *acknowledge* the obligation, when we take it upon ourselves by our own act, when we voluntarily *promise* to receive it, —it is then that we add the last item to its power. By such a promise the obligation rests upon us, not only from the nature of things and the principles of justice, but from our own *act.* Every man feels that he has some right and control over himself; and the law that binds him is more perfectly realized when he has voluntarily surrendered himself to its requirements. Then conscience will hold up to him not only the abstractions of justice, but the confessions and promises he has made —his voluntary pledge, his recorded and blood-sealed oath. To this principle of our nature the Almighty

appeals. He requires of us to be his by taking upon ourselves the obligation, by giving ourselves to Jesus Christ, and pronouncing, by our own act, the holy truth, *We are not our own, we are bought with a price;* and by uttering, as we take this seal, *All that the Lord hath said will we do.*

Do you hesitate to pronounce this oath? Then you will not enter into covenant with God, and you need expect no benefit from this communion. You must not come here to cast off the obligations to holiness, but to take them solemnly upon yourself. This sacrament is not simply a pledge of the Almighty to you, it is also a pledge of yourself to him. And when you come to it only to obtain remission of past offences, and to gain the assurance of God's favor,—when you come to it thinking that in this ordinance God promises everything, and requires nothing, you mistake your covenant, and will will lose its blessings.

There are two very common sentiments of this error, which are apt to enter into our feelings and our practices, even if we do not allow them to be our principles. The one is, that in this covenant Jesus Christ is offering himself to us in all the benefits of his obedience and sacrifice, and is requiring of us no obedience in return. The other is, that in this covenant Jesus Christ is offering himself to us far enough to compensate for any deficiency there may be in us; that if we fail in our obedience, his own obedience will so far come in its stead.

After much thought I have been unable to determine which is the worst and most dangerous of these errors. The one destroys all principles of Christian fidelity, and is the basis of a false faith and heartless reliance upon the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. The other fosters a

spirit of self-righteousness, mingles the merits of the sinner with the merits of his Saviour, and does almost as much as the former to destroy the principles of obedience. Let us not run into either of these errors. They are both opposed to the covenant we are about to renew. Jesus Christ does not here offer himself to us to excuse us from obedience, but to bind us to it. Jesus Christ does not here offer himself to us to compensate for our defects, but to be our only and entire sufficiency. He requires of us to say to him, *All that the Lord hath said will we do.*

Do you refuse to pronounce this oath? Then you do not enter into covenant with God. But why should you refuse it? God does not require of you to redeem this promise in your own strength. If you were to rely upon yourself to *do all that the Lord hath said*, you would fail in every instance. If your hope were in your own powers, well might you refuse to make this solemn pledge. But your trust must be in the grace of Jesus Christ. He gives himself to you when you give yourself to him. He asks of you to rely upon his grace, to receive his grace, to yield yourself to the control of his grace. It is through your own faculties, your voluntary obedience, your heart given up to his influence, and your life yielded to his control, that he would have you redeem the pledge you are about to make. And it is by furnishing you with grace and strength in all these respects, that he will redeem the pledge he makes to you. Jesus Christ knows all your weakness, all your temptations, all your trials. He does not require of you *any thing* which he will not give you grace to perform. He does not ask of you to bind yourself to him more closely than he binds himself to you. God would *exalt*

you in this covenant. He would not treat you as inactive and senseless matter, nor operate upon you as if you were incapable of holy aims and generous sentiments. He condescends to come down and unite himself to you, that you may be exalted to *sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

Do you hesitate to renew your covenant? There is, my brethren, there is, I confess, something awful in this league. The poor, frail, sinful mortal,—the creature whose thousand imperfections come floating over his memory,—here takes upon himself the oath to be faithful to his God! Passing into covenant under the recollection of all that weight of wrath which Jesus Christ suffered when he groaned in Gethsemane and died on Calvary, he consents to become the victim of the same wrath forever, if he is not faithful to his word! These are fearful reflections for creatures like us. But while we consent to what is awful, let us not lose sight of what is consoling. Let us keep in mind that we have in ourselves no strength nor sufficiency to be faithful, and that God only requires of us to rely on him and exercise the grace and strength he gives. And when we remember the sufferings of the victim of this covenant, and repeat in solemn supplication to God, "Let it not thus be done unto us,"—let us bear in mind that this is a covenant of repentance. We come to its security only by repentance, and we pledge ourselves to live a life of repentance for all our sins, and to trust always for salvation, not in our obedience, but in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Do you hesitate to renew your covenant? Alas! my brethren, where shall we go if we turn away from God? What Saviour shall we find if we reject Jesus Christ?

What security shall we have if we find none in the blood and bonds of this covenant? And if it *is* an awful thing to enter into such a covenant with such a God and such an obligation, with such an oath and such a victim, is it not still more awful to refuse it? Then let us see that we *refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we refuse him that speaketh from heaven.*

What wait we for, then, but

VI. The bloody seal.

This is the last article of our discourse, my hearers, and this we shall defer till we come to the Table of our Master.

THE BLOODY SEAL.*

[A SEAL.] Blood: the victim is slain.

ON THE PART OF GOD.

1. Of *forgiveness.*—Call upon all sinners—Do you say too humiliating?—bitter herbs.
2. Of *grace.*—Israel had yet to travel, to suffer, to fight, to conquer;—weak, then strong.
3. Of *redemption:—for thou wast slain.*—All that sin deserved fell on the head of the devoted Saviour—soul troubled—*Oh, my Father, if it be possible!*

In short—

4. Of *heaven.*—Isaiah liv. 10 and li. 6—to him that hath loved us.—Then where will those be who have no covenant? Ashamed!

* These fragmentary notes, annexed to the manuscript sermon, formed the basis and will be found to give an outline of the remarks under the sixth head, which were subsequently delivered at the "Table of the Master."

ON THE SINNER'S PART.

1. Of *trust in Christ's righteousness.*—Act of faith.
2. Of *reliance on his grace.*
3. Of *obedience to his laws;* of *fidelity.*—Faithful unto death.—Awful! see the *consoling.*—Why require this? Because he would have us unite ourselves to him in the same close, constant, perfect manner as he unites himself to us.

In short-

4. Of *entire surrendry—not his own—bought*—first time, —no half-way Christians—sacred host.

VII.

Why Weepest Thou?

"Woman, why weepest thou?"—John. xx. 13.

MARY, to whom these words were addressed, stood by the tomb of Jesus. It was a dark hour to her grief-struck heart. Hopes, long indulged, seemed forever disappointed; the fondest expectations had given place to unmingled sorrow. She had stood by the Cross of Jesus, and heard him, in preparation for his death, commit to the care of the beloved disciple her who gave him birth. This last act of filial affection, performed on the Cross itself, seemed like the dying farewell that the departing spirit leaves for those it loves.

The Lord had been crucified. The faith of his followers was shaken. The enemies of Jesus were exulting, and his friends covered with mourning. Amidst the insults of an unbridled populace he had expired; suffering that kind of punishment and death which even Roman cruelty never allowed to be inflicted upon a Roman citizen, however criminal, but reserved for the despised foreigner and the meanest slaves. Little seemed to remain but the mournful duty of rendering funeral

honors to the dead. It is a sad office to visit the tombs of those we love. Then the recollection of past endearments swells in gushing tenderness over the soul! The one who loved and cherished us is gone. Senseless beneath the sod we gaze upon, the heart that once yearned over us is still. Never again shall it swell in the fondness of its affection, or sadly throb when hurt by our unkindness. We cannot call back from the grave the loved one, to requite his kindness, to confess our follies, and atone for the errors which so often pained the living. Our tender regrets can only be acknowledged to the tomb. There we may confess our errors, may testify our penitence, may indulge our grief, and bedew with our tears the tomb of one we loved.

On such an errand of sadness and affection, Mary had gone early to the tomb. *She loved much, for she had much forgiven.* While living, Jesus Christ had witnessed the affection that she bore to him, and now he was dead she would breathe the same affection, though in sadness, by the cold rock where he slumbered, and water his tomb with her tears.

But though the friends of Jesus on earth were sad, the heavens had not forgotten him. Angels robed in white came down to the guarded sepulchre. They rolled away the stone, and Jesus Christ, the conqueror of the grave, arose.

It is a sad solace to mourn by the grave of departed friends, still, there *is* a solace in bedewing their ashes with our tears. To know they are sleeping in the quiet house, no longer disturbed by the afflictions of life, no longer distressed by the unkindness and cruelty of a thankless world, to feel that ingratitude and hatred and bitter malignity shall no more assail them, soothes at

least the poignancy of our grief, gives a calmer tenderness to the melancholy that spreads over the soul. But even this sad solace is denied to her who *came when it was yet dark to the sepulchre.* She *seeth the stone taken away*, and her affectionate pilgrimage to the grave of Jesus only enhances her grief. She announces the fact to his disciples; they visit the tomb themselves, and depart *for their own home.* But Mary still remains. She has abandoned herself to grief, and, in the forgetfulness of disappointed affection, still lingers by the lonely tomb. At this moment of sorrow, the heavenly messengers address her, *Woman, why weepest thou?* So absorbed by the thoughts of her Lord that she is unterrified by the vision and the voice of angels, she replies, *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.* Immediately Jesus Christ himself puts the same question, *Woman, why weepest thou?* She replies, not knowing to whom she speaks, *Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him!* Jesus makes himself known to her by simply pronouncing the name, *Mary!* It was the voice of him she had known and loved, and whom she expected to find slumbering in the tomb.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are cardinal doctrines of Christianity. Strike out these from the system, and I confess I should not value all that is left. The moral precepts would still be beautiful, but where would be their divine enforcement? the dogmas of philosophic heathenism would be able to compete with them. The disclosures of another world would still be grand, but what would prove their truth? the dreams of poetic fancy would claim an equality. The strain of its sentiments would still be interesting, but they

would interest only like a fable—what would testify their truth? And more than all, what would comfort the sinner? The soul that is burdened with guilt needs something to relieve it from its load. The heart oppressed with grief needs some solace for its sorrows. The mind, agitated and distressed with fears, cannot be comforted with uncertain conjecture. And the conscience, tormented with awful forebodings as the light of truth comes in upon its darkness, can gather secure peace from nothing save the love of Christ.

It is the high privilege, and the dearest, choicest joy of our ministry, to speak comfort to the afflicted. Standing by the tomb of the risen Saviour, we would say to all who love our Lord, and who seek him even in his deepest humiliation, *Why weepest thou?* We would comfort the distressed, soothe the fearful, encourage the timid to hope, and pour the kindness of divine compassion into the soul sorrowful for sin. There is no trouble of the afflicted soul that may not find its remedy in the love of Christ. To every weeping, despairing sinner, we may say, *Why weepest thou?*

Come, then, mourning sinner, open your heart to the consolation of the gospel? We stand here to announce to you mercy that knows no limit among men, grace that is without discrimination to the penitent, and eternal life bought by the blood of Christ. We announce to you that Saviour whose love has stilled the sighs of many a heaving bosom, and we say to you, *Whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out.*

1. In spite of the darkness and ignorance that sin spreads over the human mind, there is still light enough to convince man that he is a sinner. If we examine the history of the human race, from the earliest ages and

through the darkest periods, we find the proof of this position written as with sunbeams upon its page. The most ignorant and the most enlightened; the vicious and the moral; the philosopher, moving so proudly through the halls of science, and by achievments of intellectual greatness demonstrating the greatness of the human soul, and the degraded, debased, uninstructed, almost unnoticed barbarian, whose whole efforts seemed confined to shielding his body from hunger and inclement skies; those scorched by southern suns and those chilled by northern cold; in short, all mankind, in all ages, have professed the conviction that their God was not at peace with them. We do not deny that there have been some whose individual speculations have led them to the opinion that man is not guilty, and God not displeased. But there have been no classes or societies of people whose sentiments have not been opposed to these speculations. The belief that man, that dying man, is a sinner, that the Deity, or deities, which rule over him are offended, has been the common belief of all *nations*, and is still the sentiment of all *individuals* whose native darkness has not been deepened by the follies of unfounded conjectures. Hence we find the heathen philosopher, whose studies could investigate and arrange and classify the various objects of earth, and whose scientific skill could measure the heavens, and foretell the times of the darkened sun and laboring moon; and the savage, whose mind, chained in ignorance, knows not the sublimity of its powers,—we find them equally conscious of their danger, and alike worshipping as sinners at the altar of some imagined deity. Hence we find the unequalled Cicero, whose learning and eloquence swayed haughty Rome in the days of her brightest splendor.

robed in the vestments of the high-priest, and wielding the pontific axe around the altars of his heathen deities. Hence, too, the vales of our own land have witnessed the frenzy of the Indian prophet, when, painted for the work of death, he danced wildly around his victims, and wildly howled; and its mountains have echoed the death-shrieks of that victim as he fell beneath the tomahawk. Hence the blood of the sacrifice has dyed the snows of the Esquimaux, and congealed in the frosts of Patagonia. It has moistened the sands of Africa and Arabia, has dripped from the altars of the Druid, and gushed around the senseless Juggernaut.

This common sentiment of mankind—'tis nature speaking out nature's want—this universal *conviction* of sinfulness, I am unable to regard as much less than, itself alone, positive and sufficient proof of the fact. Were it not so, would the Creator of the human soul have allowed it to be so indelibly written on the soul itself? Could a feeling, productive of so much misery, (and of no felicity, if untrue,) have been suffered by the God of goodness to take such strong hold of the mind, if there were no foundation for it in mournful fact?

But all the devices of heathen superstition have been unable to satisfy the mind that the sinner could be forgiven, and his God reconciled. The sacrifices of idolatry and ignorance could never be relied upon with unshaken confidence. Though the distressed sinner presented victims of more and more value, till, having exhausted the treasures of his wealth, he devoted to death the children of his love, still his conscience was not at peace, and nothing told him his sins were forgiven. The truth that man feels himself a sinner is not more plainly recorded in his actions, than the truth that all his at-

tempts to satisfy his conscience and satisfy his heart have been ineffectual. These attempts were only the efforts of ignorance and despair. Hope hardly smiled on them, and conscience never said, It is enough. The mistaken votary went back from the sacrifice of his children, to find his God still an enemy and his home vacant of its murdered inmates.

But the darkness and the despair of sin vanish before the light and hope of the gospel. Here we *behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.* The victim slain, when viewed in the light of unadulterated truth, is seen to be sufficient for all transgression, and the pacified conscience drinks in joy from that truth, *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.*

I am unable to conceive in what manner the conscience, the mind, the heart of any sinner could rest upon the atonement of a created Saviour. That idiot dream would strip me of every hope, and leave me as sad as if I mingled in heathen rites, and wept over the cold corpses of my children slain in sacrifice. I am unable to conceive how any rational mind can suppose a created being *capable* of doing any thing more than his duty to his Maker; how such a mind could ever believe that any creature of God could serve God better than his creation required, and thus not only be just himself before his Maker, but be *more* than just—bring his Creator *in debt* to him, and have a righteousness sufficient for the souls of others. If God is my Creator, he has a claim upon all I am and all I can do,—and I can never do *more* than my duty,—and, when I have saved myself, plead before God my righteousness to exculpate some less happy fellow-creature. Nor could I rest my salvation on a created arm; I should always feel inse-

cure, and I could almost as soon gather hope from the offerings of the blinded heathen, the blood of self-ordered sacrifices. And why should I not as soon rest my soul upon these as on the merits of any created being? *Both* are *creatures* of God, and I cannot understand why one, as an offering to God, should not in itself be as acceptable as the other. It is, indeed, derogatory to the Deity to suppose he is to be *worshipped* as though he needed any thing, and to suppose him propitiated by costly sacrifices of his own creations is very much like supposing him to resemble one of us. Such costly sacrifices, when furnished by ourselves, might testify how much we *desired* his favor, but, when furnished by him from his own finite creatures, are not susceptible of any explanation. It is the Deity of our Saviour that gives value to his sacrifice. It is this alone that enables me to rely upon it; and sooner than rest my hopes of forgiveness upon any created being, I would cut myself loose from such moorings, and venture on the ocean of eternity without a friend and without a Saviour. Sooner could I hope, myself, to be righteous before God, than expect another creature to be more than righteous, and God his debtor.

In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we have every thing the heart can desire. He is the *mighty God*, the *prince of peace*, and the sinner need not fear to rest his soul in his keeping.

There are times when the heart is more than usually filled with sadness. It is one effort of the adversary to deprive the Christian of his comfort. Perhaps some poor sinner here finds the memories of his sins coming in a cloud of gloom over his soul. He thinks of their countless number, he dwells upon their high enormity,

he considers their varied character, and he asks, Can such iniquities ever be forgiven, and such a sinner saved?

Why weepest thou? The *blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* Here, then, you may find all you need; you may rest your soul upon the divinity of his sacrifice, and mingle your tears with his blood. We love to say to you, mourning sinner, that there is no limit to his mercy. But seek not your consolation by concealing your guilt. Tell over all your sins, weigh their enormity, and measure their aggravations; let the catalogue swell before you as it will, and the recollection of your guilt gather deeper sadness upon your heart. Still, *Why weepest thou?* Jesus Christ is ready to forgive. Pour your sorrows into his bosom; mingle your sighs with his groans; dry your tears by his tomb, or blend the peace of believing with the godly sorrow of the heart. Jesus Christ would not have you forget your sins; neither would he have you forget his sacrifice. Never attempt to gain consolation in any other way than by pleading guilty and praying for peace. You need not mourn in despair: *Why weepest thou? there is balm in Gilead, a physician there.*

2. But notwithstanding this fulness of forgiveness vouchsafed in the atonement of Jesus, there are times when the heart does not distinctly receive it; a cloud intervenes between the soul and the Sun of righteousness; the heavens are turned into brass, and the cries of the sinner seem to be sent back into his own bosom. Though he believes in Jesus Christ, and would seek him even at his tomb, yet a sense of his loving-kindness is

withdrawn, and, like Mary, he laments, *They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

If there *is* in the sorrows of human nature one feeling of sadness deeper than any other, it is simply this. This is the desertion of the soul. It is the heart robbed of its hopes; it is the lonely widowhood of the bereaved spirit, abandoned to its own sorrows. It is unlike the sadness of the desponding sinner that never hoped, never loved, and never rejoiced. It is a deeper wretchedness, a more tender agony, more cheerless distress. The joy which it has *known* and *valued* is taken away; it feels what it has *lost*, not the want of what it never had, and whose worth it never knew. I suppose it is the same kind of feeling that Jesus Christ had upon the Cross, in those hours of darkness when the sun refused its light, and when the dying Saviour, forsaken of his Father, cried, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

And if any of us find ourselves in this sorrowful condition, if we have lost the sense of the love of Christ, and seem deserted and abandoned of heaven, let us go, like Mary, to the sepulchre. No sinner ever went there to weep in vain. *Why weepest thou?* is the language of the gospel, of angels, of Jesus Christ himself, to the sinner that seeks him early at the tomb. If we keep at a distance from Jesus Christ, ashamed of the humility of discipleship, ashamed of the *nature* and recoiling from the *strictness* of the duties he enjoins, we shall find no diminution of our darkness. We may, indeed, in the delirium of the world, and the forgetfulness of heaven, chase away for a moment our gloom, but our joy will be of a deceitful character, and serve only to enhance our sadness. Like the lightning that plays upon the cloud of the midnight heavens, it will only reveal the gather-

ing terrors of the storm, and vanish, to leave us darker still. Let us, then, follow Jesus Christ, though in darkness and to the grave. *Why weepest thou?* will be the language of his mercy. And this is the high privilege of *all* who, in *any* manner, have lost the joys and consolations of their religion. You need not be always in fear and sadness. *Why weepest thou?* Jesus Christ is of tender mercy; follow him, and sorrow shall be lost in joy! *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

3. But the soul that sorrows is ingenious to increase its sorrows. Its own unworthiness is often made to furnish an argument of gloom.

Those who have no doubt of the ability and readiness of Christ to save, and no doubt that he possesses a fulness of grace and consolation *now* to bestow upon the believer, often deprive themselves of every consolation by mistaking the methods of his grace. They suppose there is loving-kindness for others, but none for them. Others are more worthy than they; others do not possess a heart of so much insensibility and sin; others are very pure and nigh to God, and the joys of his love are not denied to them. But *they* are afar off! too unworthy to be noticed of heaven! They dare not approach Jesus Christ, and rest upon his mercy! But the methods of grace are forgotten when we indulge such thoughts. *Why weepest thou?* Jesus Christ does not console because we are worthy of his consolation,—because we have any goodness in ourselves to recommend us to him,—but because we cast ourselves upon him, and trust his unmerited compassion. We honor him

most when we trust in him most perfectly; and we exercise such trust when we feel our sinfulness most strongly. The sinner is never so well prepared for the exercise of consoling faith as when he finds he can do nothing. The very *feeling* of *unworthiness* which sometimes troubles the heart of the poor penitent is the only *worthiness* that Jesus requires. We are none of us worthy of the least of his mercies, and would to God that we felt it more deeply! we should not then live so far from him, and walk so carelessly before him; we should not then pray so feebly for his grace, and come so coldly to the sacramental board. God would teach every soul he deigns to bless, that his blessings are all unmerited, and what he requires of us is to know and feel that they are so. And there is no evidence of our being the real disciples of Christ better than this strong, deep feeling of our entire unworthiness of any of his mercies. If we feel ourselves worthy of him, it is certain proof that we are not so, for it shows that we are ignorant of our own nature, and have not been taught of the Holy Ghost.

And if any of you have been afflicted with the fear that Jesus Christ would show you no mercy because you were not more worthy of him, though you desire his salvation and are willing to forsake the world and follow him, let me say to you, in the language of the blessed Jesus, *Why weepest thou?* Fear not, broken spirit! there is mercy in heaven, there is tender compassion in Jesus Christ. Only live nigh to him; rest your heart upon him; carry your unworthiness and your sins to his sepulchre, and dry your tears in converse with your risen Saviour.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the joy of the

infant church. His followers, dispersed and disheartened by his death, lived to see him again in their circles, and listen to the instructions of his lips. He *rose* to give joy on earth. The first words he uttered were words of consolation. Standing by the vanquished grave robed in the spoils of death, he speaks to the waiting believer, *Why weepest thou?* He suffered not the tender bosom to heave with uncertainty. *He drieth the mourner's tears.* The earliest at the tomb was the earliest to be consoled; and she who came weeping in bitterness, retired, weeping for joy.

And think you Jesus is not still the same tender friend, the same compassionate, consoling Saviour? *Why weepest thou?* Gather all your afflictions, your fears, your distressing doubts and despondency, and bring them to the grave of Jesus, and he will say to you, *Why weepest thou?*

This affecting sympathy of the dying and of the risen Saviour is worth more than worlds. Let the joys of earth depart; let the *hopes*, even, of the world decay; let these eyes grow dim, this frame bend downward with the weight of years; let earthly friends forsake me, swept away in death and carried to the grave—but leave, oh! leave me the compassion of the blessed Jesus! These eyes, gushing with tears—this bosom, heaving with sobs—this heart, distressed with sorrows—still I will not despond while I can hear the language of Jesus, *Why weepest thou?*

It is no ordinary friend that you are called to remember. It is he who was crucified for you, and who burst from the cold, damp vault of death to speak to you in consoling accents. Honor him by confidence equal to his consolation. Distrust not his readiness to save.

Accept the comfort he offers you, and drink in the tenderness of his language, *Why weepest thou?*

Celebrate the praises of your risen Lord. Call heaven and earth to witness your gratitude. Renew your covenant with God. Come to his Table with a penitent and believing heart, and whatever may be your sins, whatever may be your sorrows, whatever fears gather in sadness over the soul, *fear not*—it is Jesus who speaks to you,—*Why weepest thou?*

My dear friends, I know this is a tearful world. Distress and fear are natural to us as the breath of life. We think of God, and are troubled. We know the cold grave will soon be our bed, and that the God we shall meet in eternity is a holy God; and not a sin of our life, of our hearts, will be kept out of sight at the judgment seat of Almighty God. But, oh! what a difference it makes to us when we see Jesus Christ going up upon the throne of judgment! With bloody side and wounded hands he sits there in judgment for us—yea, for us! If he were a creature we might tremble, but he is the *mighty God.* He knows what the redemption of a sinner demands, and he knows he has rendered it. Oh! it will be sweet for the believer to rush to the judgment seat of Christ—his best friend is on it!

And why need the believer fear to die? Jesus Christ died, and death is now a vanquished enemy. When we die, Jesus Christ will know it. *He will come again and receive us to himself.*

Then why should we stand *by the sepulchre weeping?* This ought to be a day of solemn joy in the tabernacles of the righteous. You are going to anticipate heaven. You are going to meet the risen Jesus to-day. You are

going to remember his death—the redemption of sinners—and to rejoice in the open fellowship of God. Be not afraid! Old communicant and young communicant, be not afraid! Love God—love Jesus Christ. You have no other friend who loves you like the Saviour, and your fellowship in his love to-day is designed to cheer and comfort your hearts, and fit you for death and heaven. The Lord meet us at his board, and bless us; and to his name be eternal praises! Amen.

VIII.

Christ our Passover.

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.—1 Cor. v. 7.

THERE is something singularly striking in that expression of St. Paul,—*I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* To a mind which does not enter somewhat fully into the nature of Christianity, this seems to be a very limited field of thought; and to a heart which has not caught much of the spirit of Christianity, this limitation will be very unwelcome. But St. Paul knew the nature and breathed the spirit of his religion. *Jesus Christ, and him crucified,* opened to this apostle no narrow field. It was a theme never exhausted: he found it an unbounded range. It was a subject of which his heart was never weary; its pulses seemed to beat more warm and full, as its affections centred more exclusively on the Cross.

In every system there is some pervading principle, some controlling law, some ruling spirit which gives character to the system and forms its distinguishing mark. Every school of philosophy and the arts possesses some such distinctive feature, and its professors or practitioners are distinguished, in point of excellence, very much according to the immediate application they

make of the ruling principle of their system. The mathematician boasts of his definitions, and the more immediate his application of them the more excellent his skill. The physiologist follows the law of induction, and the linguist appeals to common usage; and the security of both of them lies wholly in their adherence to the true principles of their profession. The astronomer, who measures the orbits of the planets, and tells us the times they will occupy in moving along their celestial track, would soon lose himself in the heavens but for the laws of motion and gravitation which hold him secure. It is the knowledge of this pervading principle which gives him confidence and secures him truth. And so in every other system. There is always some controlling power, influencing everything connected with it, no less really (if not manifestly) than the sun holds in their orbits the planets that surround him.

In Christianity, *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, is the living principle. Here is the distinguishing, the controlling power; and everything else is not only subordinate, but everything else derives its whole importance from this. Strike out this, and all is lost. You might as well strike the sun from the heavens, and expect that the bodies which roll around him would hold on their way and shine with the same ceaseless splendor.

St. Paul well knew what was the controlling, presiding, pervading principle of religion, and he would never lose sight of it. *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, was always in his eye.

Hence we find this great apostle ever lingering around the Cross. His arguments come fresh from Calvary; they are drawn from the living fountain, their force,

their unction, is the blood of Jesus. Hear him exhorting the believer, and he makes Jesus Christ the point of his remark: *As ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him.* Hear him lifting his warning voice to the unbeliever. Jesus Christ is the awful subject that loads his words with alarm. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.* Hear him dwelling on the mysterious purposes of God. Jesus Christ is at once their mystery and their manifestation. *According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Hear him endeavoring to lift the believer away from earth. Jesus Christ is the buoyant principle that would fix and fasten his heart on heaven. *If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Jesus Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* Hear him striving to sweeten the felicities of domestic life, and sanctify the bonds of love. Jesus Christ is still his theme. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.* Indeed, he carries this argument of Jesus Christ (the Alpha and the Omega of religion) into every doctrine and every principle and every duty, till, having accompanied the believer through his whole life, he stands in holy triumph, and preaches Jesus by his grave, *For if we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* He sanctifies their dust; he seals the door of their sepulchre, and writes on it the death-warrant of death: *I will be thy plagues, O death!*—the title-deed of eternal being,—*I am the resurrection and the life.*

In the words of our text, he is preserving the same system. Exhorting the Corinthians to purity, both to purify their church from unworthy members and their hearts from feelings of *malice and wickedness*, he charges them to *purge out the old leaven*, to take away that contagious iniquity which was likely to infect the whole; and the argument by which he enforces the exhortation is the argument of Christ. *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* Here we find this great apostle making Jesus Christ not only the substance of the Christian dispensation, but the substance of what was shadowed forth in one of the most solemn and expressive types of the Jewish economy. His argument for purity has particular reference to the Jewish feast of unleavened bread, which immediately succeeded the Paschal supper; so that the expression of our text would naturally suggest to the mind that feast, so expressive of purity. But our present design is not to consider that connection, but to confine ourselves to the passover as a type of Jesus Christ.

That the Jewish passover was typical of Jesus Christ needs no proof; it is sufficiently manifest in the words of our text, *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.*

Not entering into the full explanation of this type of Christ, we will remark on some of its leading ideas. 1. The circumstances under which the passover was instituted. 2. The extent. 3. The manner in which it was to be eaten. Only these three things, and these as simply as possible.

I. The circumstances under which this feast of the passover was instituted are very remarkable. The Israelites were in the power of their enemy. For more

than two hundred years they had borne the galling yoke of Egyptian bondage. Their fathers and mothers had gone down to dust, leaving them no inheritance but the chain of slavery and the lash of the taskmaster. In unrelaxed servitude they sighed, and sighed in vain. This typifies the bondage of the sinner. Aside from the redemption of Jesus Christ, he has no resource. He is in the power of his enemy, and, if no deliverer arise, his slavery will be eternal. God had raised up Moses to stand before Pharaoh and demand the release of the oppressed. One plague after another, in swift and awful succession, had spread over the guilty land. Still the heart of the king was hardened, and the chain was not loosed. *One plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt*, saith the Lord; *all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die.* The angel of death was coming in the night to smite the first-born in every house. To secure themselves against his stroke, every family of the children of Israel was to sacrifice a lamb, and sprinkle its blood on the two side-posts of the door of their houses, and also over the door; it was not to be sprinkled upon the door-sill, (though everywhere else around it,) because blood, even only typical of Jesus Christ, is never to be trodden under foot. When the blood was thus sprinkled, the Israelites were to lock themselves in their houses; death, the destroyer, was coming. God was visiting in vengeance, and wherever he *beheld the blood upon the lintel and the two doorposts, the* Lord would PASS OVER, *and not suffer the destroyer to come in.* What madness it would have been to have neglected the sprinkling of the blood, before the darkness of that awful night set in! Death, death would have entered there. What madness it would have been to have gone abroad while

the destroyer was passing over the land! There was no security save in being sheltered in a house marked with blood. And what madness it is with the sinner to neglect the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus till the Destroyer comes! Then it will be too late. *Everlasting destruction* will be the portion of every soul not sprinkled and guarded by the blood of Christ.—*There was a great cry in Egypt; there was not a house where there was not one dead. At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land.* But the Israelite, defended by the sprinkled blood, was safe; death would not touch him, and he was released from his bondage.

The children of Israel were ever afterward to observe the Lord's passover. *It is a night to be observed unto the Lord.* But I do not find that this sprinkling of the blood was ever practised in after generations. The Paschal Lamb was slain and the Paschal supper eaten, till Jesus Christ abolished the passover when he instituted our sacrament. But I find no proof that the blood was ever sprinkled but once. And I suppose the reason of this to be, that every soul once sprinkled with the blood of Christ is safe. That blood, once applied to the soul, is never washed away; it is always there; true love to Christ is never gained to be lost.

II. But the Paschal feast was always to be partaken of, because Jesus Christ is not only to be received once, but to be the constant bread of life; he is to be the constant support and nourishment of the believer's soul.

There is one thing in this eating of the Paschal supper which we would especially notice: the Paschal Lamb was to be wholly eaten—none of it was to be left till morning. Jesus Christ our passover is to be *wholly* received. The believer is to embrace a whole Saviour.

Jesus Christ is to be received in all his nature and his offices, and just as he is offered to us in the gospel. "Christ and his yoke—Christ and his cross—as well as Christ and his crown." Faith is that act of a renewed soul whereby we receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, according to the sure warrant of the gospel. It takes Christ as he is offered.

Perhaps there is no point on which the professing Christian is more liable to err than on this. There is such a thing as a partial reception, or a receiving him in a manner in which he is not offered to us; and it is this which constitutes the foundation of much false religion, even among those who are the true friends of Christ, while it leads many souls to ruin.

There is much danger that Jesus Christ will not be wholly received by those who profess to believe in him. We have no doubt that many give him only a partial reception, and rejoice in that hope which will vanish when God taketh away the soul. And we have no doubt that many true believers feed only partially on him, and, while they suppose themselves nourished by his grace, are really deluded by the devil.

When, in any manner, we mingle any thing else with the merits and atonement of Jesus Christ, we do not live wholly upon *him*. It is to be feared that there are many ways in which many persons unconsciously do his. Four particulars will evince our idea.

1. When men receive Jesus Christ, as they think, to make amends for their imperfections—to stand as their defence and surety where they cannot be their own, they give him but a partial and unprofitable reception. Jesus Christ is a whole Saviour. He is not offered to you merely to compensate for something lacking in your

own righteousness; he is offered to you to *be* your righteousness, your only hope. If you are justified at all, you must be justified solely by his blood. You need to look to him as having borne the punishment of your sins, the penalty of the law of God. God does not say to you, Do what you can for yourselves, and then come to Jesus Christ for all the rest you need. He tells you that you can do nothing for yourselves; without Christ you are *under condemnation;* and can no more recommend yourself to him than the poorest, vilest criminal that deservedly languishes in a dungeon cell. I do not say you have committed crimes as great as his, but I say you can no more recommend yourself to God, and no more enter into heaven. And if you rest upon Christ only to make up your deficiency, you do not receive a whole Saviour, and therefore do not receive him at all.

Probably there is much of this in the world. Almost every man feels something of frailty and deficiency, and probably very many live upon Jesus Christ only to supply what they themselves lack. Convinced of their deficiency, they pretend to come to him. And when a deluded heart has once felt that Jesus will save, there is rejoicing of course, because God is supposed to be reconciled and heaven secured. But this is not receiving a whole Saviour. The man who rests at all upon himself is deluded and deceived; he does not live upon Jesus Christ.

2. When we receive Jesus Christ only as our security for the future, we deceive ourselves. There are some whose conduct and apparent feelings lead us to suppose they would have Christ for their Saviour when they come to die, and they receive him for the present only far enough to become, as they imagine, interested in

him hereafter. They give themselves partly to Jesus Christ, as they think, now, resolving to be more perfectly his before they die. Part of their heart they withhold—part they vainly suppose themselves to surrender. All they want of a Saviour is to secure them hereafter; and they live upon him now only so far as to gain, as they suppose, a title to heaven.

This is not true religion. If you rest upon him now with only half your heart, resolving to be more nearly allied to him hereafter while you refuse it for the present, your religion is vain.

3. When we receive Jesus Christ only as a sacrifice and not as a legislator, our reception is partial and vain. Many persons suppose themselves relying upon him, whose reliance is not such as he requires and not such as will save the soul. He asks to be received in all his offices,—Prophet, Priest, and King. He not only makes atonement for sin, but he points out the way to heaven. Now, that man who merely relies on the blood of Christ to save him, while not going, or trying to go now, in the way that Jesus Christ would lead him, is no Christian. What is it to be a Christian? Is it to sit down contented, rejoicing that Jesus Christ will save us when we are dead and gone; or is it to follow Jesus Christ, to obey when he speaks, to walk where he points, and tread in the path of holiness he opens? That reliance on Jesus Christ which leaves holiness out of the question, which releases the creature from allegiance to heaven, which blots out the Law of God as a rule of duty, is no saving faith. And many persons who think themselves Christians, and sure of heaven, have just such a reliance as this. They trust in Jesus Christ not only to shield them from the condemnation of God's

holy law, but to release them from their obligations of obedience to it. They sometimes tell us (abusing their Bible) that they are not under the law, but under grace. With them it is a light thing to break the law of God, because Jesus Christ has satisfied its claims for them. Atonement for sin has been made, and therefore they take encouragement to sin! It is true that the sincere and well-instructed believer is not under the law as a system of justification, but he *is* under it, and always will be under it, as a rule of life; and so long as he is sincere and well instructed, he will consider himself so. Man is just as guilty, and ought to feel himself just as guilty, for every violation of the law of God, as if no mercy pointed him to the blood of atonement. And he ought to shudder at every wilful violation of it, just as much as if no Saviour had died. Yet, I fear that many who hope in Christ, hope in him no less to free them from obedience, than to secure them from hell. Indeed this has grown into a principle, and some openly contend that we are not, as Christians, bound by the moral law. But what a principle! Not bound by the law—holiness! What then are we? moral beings cut loose from allegiance to God! moral beings flung by the very hand of God from beneath his rule! moral beings let loose from law, and at liberty to sin! Ah! indeed; on this principle there is no such thing as sin in the believer. If he is not under obligation to obey the law as a rule of life, then he cannot disobey, and consequently cannot sin! But, strange as this principle is, it is too common. The minds of Christians are not always free from its temptations, and their hearts still less so. Have you not sometimes had this temptation—the unworthy thought that sin is less

dreadful because of atoning blood? Have you not been almost ready to take encouragement to sin from the fulness and freeness of Christ's all-sufficient and satisfying sacrifice; and because you were not to be *saved by works of righteousness*, thought more lightly of sin? What a strange kind of religion this would be, should you adopt it! An argument for sin drawn from the blood of Christ! and religion release from holiness! What strange inconsistencies! But, strange as they are, they are not uncommon. They arise from the partial reception of Jesus Christ—from receiving him as a sacrifice and not as a lawgiver. There is no religion in this. Jesus would make you holy; he would teach you to obey, and love to obey, a holy law; he would prepare you for a holy heaven. If you would be saved, you must receive a whole Saviour: the whole of the Paschal Lamb was to be eaten. In those who are true believers there is also an error in the *practice* of the mind and heart (not in the state of justification) which partly resembles the error of some of the deceived. The deceived are often in this error, and true piety, misguided, is in it sometimes.

4. When we mingle our own graces with the merits of Jesus Christ, and feast our hearts upon them, we are practically giving to the Saviour an erroneous reception, or a partial, and therefore a false one. This error is more common than is imagined. A heart, over which the Holy Ghost has moved in renewing power, still retains much of its original corruptions; the chaos is not all reduced to order, and even such persons are extremely liable to err. And how often we find those whom we believe to be Christians running into this delusion of the devil, mingling their own graces with the blood of

Christ, and rejoicing quite as much in their own feelings as in their Saviour. They feed on their own high emotions; they tell us how full they are of grace—how happy they are—when, evidently, they are happy only in themselves; they live on their own experience instead of living upon Christ. Their view is directed to their own hearts when they would find comfort, and, in miserable delusion they find it there. Is this the exercise of true piety? No! it is pitiable delusion—it may be only false religion. It is mingling fictitious piety with the blood of atonement; it is vain self-confidence, and self-rejoicing, and living and trusting upon self. The true believer (when not deluded) believes not in himself, but in his Saviour; lives not on himself, but on Christ Jesus. Just in proportion as this delusion prevails, just in that proportion is Jesus Christ abandoned.

These are methods (and we could mention others) in which men give partial reception to Jesus Christ, and fall into mistakes in religion. Let us learn to avoid them. Let us accept a whole Saviour. Let us cultivate true piety, and not rejoice in the delusions of error. The manner in which the passover was to be eaten was the third idea we mentioned.

III. It was to be eaten with *bitter herbs*. The Israelite was thereby reminded of the bitterness of his bondage; his deliverance would appear more valuable in proportion as he knew and realized the condition from which he was released. The Christian should copy his example. The humility of penitential recollections is proper for the communicant. This should always be in his bosom when he comes to Jesus Christ. He should consider his condition and the benefits of redemption together. He should never lose sight of his helplessness

and sin; he should cultivate a humble temper, and endeavor to possess a *broken and contrite heart.*

1. Consider what your *condition* was. You were in worse than Egyptian bondage. The Israelite, forced to labor for no profit, galled by the chain that bound him, driven by the lash of his taskmaster, was in a condition more enviable than yours. You were wholly in bondage, led captive in the strong cords of sin, and you could look forward to no period of release. Sin reigned, and you were its slave. Sometimes you felt its evil, and rose to gain the mastery; you resolved to struggle and be free. For a brief moment you fought against its power, but the unavailing effort only served to reveal your impotence and the strength of the chain that bound you. Your resolving *never* effected your deliverance; you struggled and sunk down in more hopeless bondage. Without God, you might have writhed forever in vain. Sin was your bondage, and in it you would have lived and died. If you are free, God in grace was your deliverer. Motives did not release you. You were the miserable slave of the world and sin. Warnings did not release you; you could go from the coffin to the club, and dissipate the fear of death with the mirth of your returning laughter. Disappointments did not release you; you rushed more madly after a deceiving world. Purposes, resolves were vain, and but for infinite grace, you would have been still the slave of the world and sin.

2. Consider your *exposure.* God was your enemy, and you were his. He loved your happiness, indeed, and therefore saved you, but he had no love for your character, and you had none for his. You were in hostility to heaven, in rebellion against God. God's holy

nature was your terror, his holy law condemned you, his holy heaven was uninviting. Every instant you were exposed to the sword of justice. God might justly have cut you off at the very moment he gave you freedom.

> "Blood sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
> And turned the wrath to grace."

3. Consider what would have been your *end.* It is a solace to the burdened slave when he can look forward to the end of life as the end of his afflictions. Every day of misery leaves one less. Every sigh he heaves brings him nearer to his release; death will come and his spirit will be free. But you were in bondage that death would only deepen! No redeeming angel would watch around your dying pillow to bear your departing spirit to a happier clime. No! For you the doom was written, for you the prison-house was built. Eternal wrath was the holy penalty of the violated law. But for God's mercy you might now have been the hopeless tenants of the eternal prison-house; justly might you have been forever lost!

4. What are you *still?* Have you no sins that call for sorrow? Where is the fidelity you owe to your Master? where the love you owe to his disciples? Whence arises the stupidity of your attempted devotions? the barrenness of your hearts? and the coldness of your affections toward one another? Whence comes your lack of tenderness to the weak, and of faithfulness to the erring? Do you not feel that you have much to repent of? that you love, honor, and serve Jesus Christ too little? Come with repentance to your passover; come, empty of yourselves, that you may be filled with

Christ. Come, mourning for sin, and mourning that you have been so unfaithful and ungrateful to *him who loved you and gave himself for you.* Come, praying for pardon; come, believing in Jesus. Be penetrated with a sense of your sins. Jesus Christ will be most precious to you when sin is most bitter. Be softened under a sense of his mercy: there is no fear he will not take away, no sorrow he will not console, no sin he will not forgive. You have only to belong to him, have his blood sprinkled on your soul, and the destroying angel will *pass over* you. Death may come, but death cannot hurt you; death and the grave are yours, if you are Christ's. Only live upon him—receive a whole Saviour—lose yourself in him—let *your life be hid with Christ in God.* Then ye may say, joyfully,

"Farewell every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or loved, or known;
Yet how blest is my condition,
Christ and heaven are still my own."

But methinks I hear the sighs of some burdened spirit, fearing to approach the Table of the Lord. Some trembling believer counts over the multitude of his sins. Ah! *woe is me!* I have been too unfaithful! How can such a one sit down at the table of Jesus! Will he not frown upon me, and send me away loaded with his curse instead of enriched by his blessing?

My dear friend, where shall we go if we turn away from Jesus Christ? If we cannot find consolation here, where can we find it? But for this Saviour, but for this blood, grief might bathe us in eternal tears, and nothing, nothing save the sadness of eternal despair might be our portion! Fear not, sorrowing believer! Jesus Christ

is the minister of consolation: come to him with that wounded heart, and he will bind it up in tenderness, and bathe it in his blood. The sigh that heaves your bosom is a sigh heard in heaven, and heaven shall send its mercy to the penitent believer. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.*

But God in infinite mercy permits some to come to the children's Table to-day who formerly have been strangers, without the bread of life and the love of the Father. My dear friends, I tremble for you because I know what a poor weak sinner's heart is—how easily he is overcome. But I rejoice for you, because I know where such a sinner can go and hide himself from his fears, his weakness, and his foes. We bless God, for your sakes, that he brings you to his board. In the name of Jehovah Jesus we bid you welcome. In the presence of God and angels and men and devils you are about to devote yourselves to Jesus Christ! Solemn transaction! High heaven will witness the scene. Spirits of love will look down from their blissful abode, and there will be *joy in heaven over the sinner that repenteth.* Child of redemption! be not afraid; God is as ready to meet you in friendship as you are to meet him. Honor him with your confidence. Make Jesus Christ yours, and you need not fear sin, Satan, God's justice, or the damnation of hell. *All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

Come, ye unpardoned! Christ is for you. *We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

Come, ye unhappy! Christ is for you. Believe, and

though *ye sow in tears, ye shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall come again with rejoicing.*

Come, *ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness!* It is better to bend in love than break in wrath. *Cast down the weapons of your rebellion: as God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Come, any sinner! Christ is sacrificed, and you may live. *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. . . . Behold, I stand at the door and knock. . . . The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

My brethren, you will meet new friends at the communion-table. Bless God for it! I hope you will yet meet them in heaven, and bless him for it there! But, oh! I want another thing of you at this communion-season. You have other friends who have not yet escaped out of Egypt. They will not be with you at the passover. They have not set their faces toward the wilderness, and I am afraid you will never meet them on the green fields of a heavenly Canaan. Will you not want them with you on your wilderness-journey? and when you buffet the waves of death, as you pass over Jordan, will you not desire to be able to say to them, Farewell for a little moment; we shall soon meet in heaven? My brother, my sister, *can* you *die* quietly till more of those you love are converted to God? Pray for the unconverted! This is what I want of you. When your own soul is full, when you can say, "I've Canaan's goodly land in view," when your heart swells

to the measure of the mercy that has redeemed you, pray down that mercy upon hearts now exposed to the vengeful justice of God. *Try the power of communion-prayer!* It will pierce heaven. It will open it. And if sparing mercy ever allows you to come again to the banqueting-house, you shall render other thanksgivings for the souls redeemed by the good grace of God.

May the Infinite One be present with you, your Redeemer, strength, and consolation!

IX.

Behold the Lamb of God!

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."—John i. 29.

THE Christian religion considers man in two very different points of view. On the one hand, it beholds him as he is; on the other, it contemplates him as he may be. It embraces the extremes of his case, and when it speaks to him, it would fasten his mind upon them.

It always addresses him as a sinner. It charges him with being vile, and rebellious, and guilty; wholly incapable of being just with God. It looks upon him as poor and helpless, doomed by the power of his corruptions to endure a bondage from which he can never release himself. It beholds him so much attached to his condition that he has not the least inclination to leave it—his heart not right with God, and having no desires to become so. It beholds him sighing away a few days of a chequered existence on earth, at last to lay his body in the dust, where the *worm shall feed sweetly on him.* And then it follows him onward to another world, and listens to his eternal sentence, filled up with that awful

imagery borrowed from *devouring flames, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never quenched.*

Who can look upon this picture of the sinner and not feel that he is examining one of the most mournful subjects that ever occupies the human mind? Who can listen to what the Bible tells him about himself, and not feel his soul stirred within him as it paints his character and points him to his prospects?

But there is another light in which Christianity would teach us to look upon ourselves. If it tells us we are guilty, it says also to us, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!* If it sees us in bondage, it points to the right arm of the Lord that can strike off our chains and set us free. If it hears our sighs, it tells us how our *mourning may be turned into joy.* Christianity teaches us how to triumph over our miseries; she offers to remove our guilt, to take away bitterness from our tears, and hopeless sorrow from our sighing; she offers to go with us to the spot where these bodies shall moulder away, and to force the grave to give back its dead. And then she would lift us away to join in the songs of the redeemed, where heaven offers the full measure of its joys, and eternity alone can limit their duration.

What a vast difference there is between the sinner redeemed and the sinner in bondage! The one moves on through the world as if this life were his all, and at best gathers but a few vain pleasures, whose sweet is sin and whose end is misery. The other makes of this world a voyage to heaven. The one is forgiven of God; death cannot hold him; hell has no claims upon him. The other refuses forgiveness; he opposes his own salvation; death is coming upon him, the grave opens her

mouth, and hell is moving toward her prey! The one enjoys the smiles and is fitting for the presence of God. The other is under the condemnation of the Eternal, and fast fitting for the society of fiends. We can scarcely exaggerate the difference between those who are in the bondage of Satan, *led captive at his will*, and those who are enjoying *the glorious liberty of the sons of God.* Angels in heaven notice this difference, and therefore there is *joy among them over* even *one sinner that repenteth*

The sacrifice made for sin in the blood of Jesus Christ at once teaches us the sad condition of the sinner, and the blessedness of that condition that is offered to him. The Cross is alike the argument for humiliation and joy. How great must have been the ill-desert of a sinner when nothing but such a satisfaction could buy off his crimes! How glorious must be that heaven purchased for the redeemed at such a price!

The sacrifice we contemplate, therefore, stands associated with all that is miserable and dreadful and degrading in sin, and with all that is blessed in having it forgiven. It calls us to count over our iniquities, to weigh our crimes, to measure our guilt, and graduate our humility and repentance by the divine sacrifice that could expiate all. It calls us to realize our obligations to him who hath *bought us with his blood;* and while we estimate these obligations by the contrasted gloom and glories of hopeless sin and an opening heaven,—gloom, vanishing as we gaze upon the Cross, and glories, opening as we prostrate ourselves before it, this sacrifice calls on us to pronounce our vows, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient.* Let this be the promise of our hearts, as we listen to this message, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

The death of Jesus Christ was an atonement for sin: it was a lesson of holiness: it made satisfaction to divine justice: it furnished arguments for holy living.

I. It was an atonement for sin. The *Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world.*

My brethren, if we ought ever to marvel at the pride and perverseness of human nature, surely we may do so when we find men blind and base enough to blot this article from their creed. It is not within our province or our desire to bring *railing accusations* against those that do so, but we cannot avoid astonishment that such men have not been better instructed by the language of scripture, by the arguments of reason, by the history of all religion:—let us notice these three.

1. The language of scripture is peculiarly clear on this point. I affirm that there is not a single truth more clearly taught in the whole word of God, than that the death of Jesus Christ was the procuring cause of the pardon of sin and the salvation of the redeemed; that those who are pardoned are pardoned through his sacrifice; those who are saved are saved by his blood.

a. What but this can be the meaning of those unnumbered passages which speak of his having *made peace through the blood of his Cross, to reconcile all things unto himself;—of those afar off made nigh by the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. We have redemption through his blood. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. Feed the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.* If the doctrine of the atonement can be explained away in the face of such language as this, there is no doctrine that cannot. With the Bible for my guide, I could as soon doubt the existence of sin as the reality of Christ's atone-

ment. There is no truth more explicitly taught in the whole Bible than this.

b. Not only express declarations record it, but it is implied where there was manifestly no design to teach it, but to appeal to it as a known and acknowledged truth. *Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God.* The design here was not to TEACH the doctrine of atonement, but to enforce the precept of fraternal love; and the *sacrifice* of *Christ for us* is appealed to as an argument to bind to brotherly affection. The New Testament is full of such argumentation, and it is wholly destitute of appropriateness if the atonement of Christ for sin is denied.

c. If we turn to the pages of the Old Testament, we shall find them filled with such types and ceremonies and prophecies (not to say explicit declarations) as no ingenuity can explain except on the principle that Jesus Christ laid down his life to make propitiation for the sins of the world. Indeed, there is no state of the Old Testament church which does not furnish thick proofs of the truth of our position; there is no year of its history which is not crowded with images of a dying Saviour, with prophetic types of the sacrifice he offered up.

You may go back to the very garden which God planted for the abode of the sinless, and, even before its shrubbery had wilted and its soil had sent up the briar and the thorn, you may hear the voice of Jehovah promising a suffering Saviour. The *father of the faithful* received the repetition of the same promise, and this promise, an apostle tells us, relates to Jesus Christ. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.*

He saith not to SEEDS, *as of many, but, as of* ONE. *And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

You may join in the first homage ever offered by a sinner and accepted by his God, and you will find the atonement acknowledged in the offerings of Abel. Cain believed in no atonement; he wanted no type of the blood of Jesus. He was the first sinner that rejected salvation bought by blood; and all who follow his sad example will receive his awful rejection of God.

Trace the history of the church from age to age, and you find its ceremonies and ordinances one perpetual proof of the promise of God, and the faith of holy men in the atoning blood of a Saviour. We know not how special was the faith of the Old Testament saints. Doubtless it was less special than that of those who have history in room of prophecy, and substance in place of shadow. But there can be no doubt that the faithful who lived before the incarnation and death of the Saviour possessed the general idea that the expected Messiah was to make satisfaction for sin. Their faith rested on the promise of God, telling them what should be: ours is based on the inspired history of what has been. The generals of both are the same; the specialties are different according to the different dispensations of the church. They *all died in the faith*, says St. Paul, *not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.*

However indefinite we may suppose the knowledge of ancient saints to have been, (since it was gathered from types and symbols and shadows and prophecies,) still it seems almost impossible that there should not have been considerable minuteness attending it. The

constant sacrifices they presented could not have been viewed as themselves the propitiation for sin. Men who knew less of God, his nature, and his perfections, might have viewed them thus, but men who had studied the nature and perfections of Deity under such masters as Moses and David and Isaiah and Daniel must have known it was *not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.* Nothing, therefore, but faith in the atoning blood of a promised Saviour can explain the constancy with which they observed the commanded rites, and offered the expensive typical sacrifices.

Moreover, if you examine the predictions of the prophets, you find them proclaiming so clearly the death of Jesus Christ that they appear rather as histories recording the event, than as prophecies announcing its approach. And however these predictions may have been understood then, they are at least the most positive proof that the *instructions* of the ancient dispensation embraced a Saviour suffering for the sins of the world.

Listen to the strains that floated around the prophetic lyre of David, and you hear them sighing forth the description of the sufferings of Jesus: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I am a worm of the dust and no man: a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip at me; they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* One would almost suppose, on hearing this description, that David had stood on Calvary, heard the groans of a dying Saviour, and witnessed the insults that were heaped upon him.

Listen to the graphic description of Isaiah, and you find him portraying the sufferings of Jesus and the

atonement he made for sin, as clearly as any of your preachers ever dare to proclaim these truths: *He is despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows—he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed—the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all—he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter—for the transgression of my people was he stricken—he hath poured out his soul unto death—he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* One would almost suppose that Isaiah too had stood by the Cross of the dying Jesus, and afterwards recorded the transactions of his crucifixion with a historian's accuracy.

Listen to the voice of Daniel, and you hear of sin and its atonement as clearly as we ever dare to preach them to you: *Seventy weeks are determined . . . to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy . . . the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.*

And hear Zechariah, also kindling with the spirit of prophecy, pour forth the exclamations of an ancient believer, rehearsing the promise of his Maker: *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.* So full and so clear are ancient predictions and ancient history. The images of a dying Jesus are scattered everywhere along the history of the church and the writings of the prophets. Ordinances, ceremonies, promises, prophecies, all unite in

one harmonious voice: *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

d. There is one other consideration we ought, as Christians, as believers, to take along with us. It is the argument by which God would win us, or rather, the foundation on which is based the right he claims over us. What is this argument, this foundation on which rests his claim? I do not say there is only one. I know he has various holds upon us, and claims us as his, and bound to obey him, on various grounds. But I say the claim of the Deity to us is more frequently based on redemption than on any other principle. This is the most usual argument by which he would make us feel our obligations to him. We cannot now enter into this article. A full examination would require a volume. But if you will notice, as you read your Bible, on what principle God claims you, you will find it the principle of *redemption* more frequently than the principle of *creation* even. It has been said that the most perfect right is that of creation; that God has more entire right over us because he created us, than for any other reason. I will not say that his right, based on creation, is not perfect, but I do say it is not more perfect than his right based on redemption, and is not so often mentioned in his Word. The principle of redemption forms even the very preamble of the moral law, the system which embraces every thing of holiness: *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* And this redemption, you know, was typical of the spiritual deliverance of Jesus Christ. It is similar to the argument of the apostle: *Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God.* Now, if we believe in no suffering of Jesus

Christ for us, where is the force of this reasoning? More, if we believe not that we are wholly lost, worse than annihilated, that it would *have been better for us never to have been born* unless we have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, then there can be no reasonable conclusiveness in these arguments of inspiration, and no propriety in so often appealing to the price paid in blood.

But we will not pursue this. We have only to say, that whatever view we take of the Holy Scriptures, we behold the Cross; whenever we listen to them we hear them say to us, *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

2. We might also appeal to Reason. We might ask her to show us how a sinful creature could ever render to his Creator so much *more* than his duty required as to compensate for past deficiencies, and thus atone for his sins. Indeed, we might ask her explanation how any created being, ever so holy and high, could serve God better than justice required, and thus bring his Creator in debt to him. If there *is* sin, and God is just, Reason must despair of salvation, except when her eye is directed to a divine Saviour. *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

3. The history of all religion is a strong confirmation of the same principle. There is a wonderful correspondence between the word of God and the history of man. Nations who never had the Bible, and never heard of a dying Saviour, have always embraced bloody sacrifices in their religion. Conscience, and the light of nature to instruct it, have been sufficient to assure them that their acceptance with Deity must depend on something without themselves. Their history gives the uni

form testimony, that *without shedding of blood is no remission of sins;* and expresses the uniform desire to *behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.* This fact is altogether inexplicable except on the principle of satisfaction for sin being shadowed forth in these ancient ordinances from which, through corrupt tradition, have arisen these universal offerings.

But we need neither the testimony of man nor the history of corrupt religion to guide us. If we will hear the Holy Spirit, the words he speaks to us will guide us to the *Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*

What an abundant source of consolation here opens to the believer! He beholds not the blood of his own offerings; not the virtue of his own oblations; not the smoke of his own sacrifices; but the *Lamb of God.* The victim was appointed of God, and accepted of God. In him God is ever *well pleased,* and the believer in him may approach his God as the child cometh to his father.

The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, scatters his consolations all along the believer's pathway, as he walks through trials and temptations and fears in his pilgrimage.

Looking back on the life you have lived, you will find it full of sins and follies. Here (you will say to yourself) I was presumptuous, and ran into temptation, like St. Peter,—there I was incredulous, like St. Thomas; at one time I was conformed to the world,—at another, my zeal for God was little better than zeal for my own sake. But if you have still an eye of faith, it will rest upon the Lamb of God: HE *has borne my sins* —HE *has made reconciliation for iniquities.*

Looking at yourself in the light of God's holiness, you will despair of heaven: you will find your heart

full of corruptions, and your life but too faithful a copy of your heart. You will look upon the *Lamb of God:* the fountains of Deity are there open to you: the sins of a world are expiated.

You will contemplate the destinies that await you. Sickness and death are in the world. You will say to yourself, In a little time this frame will be disordered, these bones filled with pain. I shall be stretched upon the death-bed, bidding adieu to all my heart holds dear. I shall see around me the friends with whom I have walked life's vale, and taken sweet counsel; and the anguish of their affection will but render more severe the breaking of the cords of life.

But, with the eye that Stephen had, you may look in upon the glories you are going to meet. *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,* is a prayer that will console the friends you leave, and the faith that can make it will take away the terrors of a dying hour.

But death only introduces me to judgment: *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.* I shudder at that trial. Every word, every thought of my whole life is to be laid open. I, who have so often sinned and refused to reform; I, whose conscience is so polluted,—how can I meet in judgment an awful and offended God? *Behold the Lamb of God!* It is he who is seated upon the judgment-seat; the accusations of that tribunal are silenced;—Jesus Christ has silenced them; he bore the inflictions of justice, and the believer in his blood is free.

It is thus that his satisfaction throws its supports and its consolation around us. The pathway of the pilgrim is everywhere cheered by some benefit of the dying Saviour.

II. But these benefits are all arguments for holiness; the death of Jesus Christ is one of the strongest pleas that Heaven makes to us.

1. Divine justice never appears so awful as when we behold it going into heaven for its victim. It is when we behold it satisfied with nothing but the humiliation and sufferings and death of the Son of God, that we are able to understand something of its strictness. It is then we learn most perfectly the keenness of that sword which is drawn against the offender.

This is the idea of the text. We are called to *behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world* in the sense of subduing it, as well as atoning for it. He who rests only on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to satisfy justice in his behalf, without learning *from* that sacrifice to fear that justice, has only taken a single step in Christianity. Shall I not rather say he is no Christian? I will not pronounce how dim may be the light, and how erroneous the ideas of a true child of God, but I will say that he who makes Christ *the minister of sin;* he who is more free to transgress because Jesus Christ has freely died, knows nothing of the saving experiences of the godly, and breathes nothing of the holy spirit of Christianity. Jesus Christ takes away sin by taking away the love of it, whenever he takes away sin by cancelling the guilt of it. Acceptance in Jesus Christ always causes the individual to hate sin more instead of hating it less.

2. And this is another argument for holy living written in the blood of the Lamb. There is nothing that shows the evil of sin so plainly as the sacrifice required to expiate it, and consequently nothing more powerful to subdue its reign in the soul. It is when the believer

enters into the mysteries of the incarnation—when he sees him who *thought it not robbery to be equal with God* coming down from heaven on an errand of suffering and love—when he beholds him *in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* undertaking the personal labor of blotting out sin, and then, unable to do it only in his blood—it is when he fixes his mind and heart on this, that he estimates sin as he ought. Then he estimates it by divinity! the divinity of the *Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!* No eye, anointed of God, can look upon the Cross without seeing the evils of sin and arguments for holiness.

3. *Again.* The great *object* of the death of the Son of God presents the same argument. *To purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*, the apostle tells us was the object of his giving himself for us. Consequently, without holiness his sacrifice will do us no good. If we are not influenced by it to holy living, however we may imagine ourselves interested in it, we know nothing of it as we ought: we are *yet in our sins.*

Indeed, in whatever connexion we view this sacrifice, the claims of holiness meet us. God would at once entitle us to heaven and prepare us for it.

Enter into these considerations as you approach the Table of your Master. Let the emblems of a crucified Saviour teach you the most solemn lessons of godliness. Let them tell you of all your ill-desert, and assure you that without his sacrifice all the sighs that might heave your bosom, all the penitence that might break your heart, all the offerings you might present, and all the prayers that in desperate agony you might send up to heaven, would avail nothing to save you from the pit. Let these emblems teach you that there is no sin

which Jesus Christ refuses to expiate, no sorrow which Jesus Christ refuses to console, no fear which Jesus Christ refuses to assuage.

Cherishing such contemplations, you cannot fail (under grace) of renewing your covenant acceptably to God. You will do it as if *self* were annihilated; you will do it in the humblest, holiest penitence; you will do it in the most exclusive faith in the blood of atonement; you will do it, swallowed up and lost in that God who here unites you to himself; *ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Communing thus with Jesus, you cannot fail of catching the spirit of heaven. Earth will lose its attractions, and when you go forth the world will take *knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus.*

Some of you come from the world. Ye have never before been at the Lord's table. We have known your trials and fears while seeking Jesus, and we bless our Lord and Master that he has lifted the burden from your sinking hearts. But our solicitude for you is not ended. We shall notice hereafter whether you seem to live nigh to Jesus, and let the savor of his love spread its tenderness over your whole heart. I pray my blessed Master to make you happy, very happy Christians. But, I am afraid for you. Ye are young in grace, and most of you are young in years. The world is full of temptations, (especially to young men,) and you tread a path spread with the snares of the devil. As I look back upon the youth of my own religion, I remember how much the grace of my heart often suffered; I feel as if I would willingly assail every young Christian with tears and entreaties of warning. Oh! if I could recall those years, I would cling closer to Jesus. No other interest

should encroach upon the interests of the heart's communion with Jesus; no other elevation should call me down from the spot where the Cross was planted; no other garden should win me from that garden where there was a sepulchre.

My young friends, much depends upon your beginning in religion. I ask you, I entreat you, be wholly Christ's. Make it your solemn purpose henceforth to serve God and God only. Come to his Table to-day to renounce the world, and choose holiness and heaven. Come to be sprinkled with the blood of atonement. Come to take the mark of God upon your foreheads. Come in the sentiment of that communion-song,

> "Jesus, I my cross have taken,
> All to leave and follow thee;
> Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
> *Thou*, from hence, my *all* shalt be."

If you come thus, be not afraid! the Saviour will meet you, and go with you to the end.

But is there no more room at the Lord's table! Why, then, are there so many that turn away? I would carry this question, if I could, into the inmost recesses of your hearts. I would write it in the blood of the Cross, and utter it in tones gathered from the words of its dying victim. Why, why, dying fellow-sinner, wilt thou not be at the communion-table to-day? My dear friends, can you answer it? Do you not need Jesus? Are you not hasting in a tearful path to another world, no friend to welcome you to glory, and shelter you from the thunders of the judgment of the most high God?

X.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."—ROMANS viii. 34.

THE gospel is full of consolations to the believer. This is one of its distinguishing features; this is, indeed, its characteristic excellence. It is *good tidings;* and though often considered by those who imbibe none of its spirit, and love not the Saviour it reveals to us, as a system of severity and gloom, yet this is only the testimony of its enemies, of those who are strangers to its spirit and its blessed hopes.

The gospel of Jesus Christ holds out its consolations to every stage of life, and presents an antidote to all the fears of sin. It greets the little child, as he comes upon the theatre of life, with those affectionate words of Jesus Christ, *Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* It opens to them the baptismal fount, and assures the believing parents that if *they* love them on earth, Jesus Christ loves them in heaven. It attends the passing

pilgrim, who is *seeking another country, even an heavenly*, through all the sorrows and labors and toils of his pilgrimage, giving him that blessed assurance that his *light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* It accompanies him while he passes through all the stages of his earthly being; and when he has travelled down to his sepulchre, and is standing among vaults and tombs and graves, and over the mouldering bones of the dead, *himself* just sinking to the dust, it says to him, *This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality: so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.* And it enables the believer to reply, *O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In short, the gospel has consolations everywhere, and these all offered through the Son of God. In the words preceding this text, the apostle was dwelling in a kind of holy triumph upon the privileges of the believer: *If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the apostle's stronghold of consolation; and this is the subject which shall now occupy us. *It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again.*

There is no doctrine, my brethren, more full of con-

soling promise than that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a pledge of our own. As we follow to the grave those we love, or as we descend ourselves into its bosom, we need not *sorrow* as those which *have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

There is no subject which has a stronger tendency to stagger belief than that of the resurrection of the dead. After repeated trials, I have been unable to conjecture that anything could be affirmed, not absolutely contrary to reason and to the perfections of the Deity, which I should be more ready to disbelieve than I should be to disbelieve the resurrection of the dead. There is something in it so contrary to all we are led by experience to expect, that it takes us away from the common field of thought and transports us to the region of miracles. The resurrection *is* a miracle. It is a thing wholly dissimilar to anything we see or know. Nature has no resemblance to it. The grass of the field that greets the spring-time with its lovely hues, carpeting our earth in green, withers and dies. The trees of the forest, smiling under the suns of so many summers and enduring the peltings of so many winters, whose branches have afforded shade to fathers and afterwards to sons, and then to *their* sons, from generation to generation, do not live forever. Everything around us is tending to decay. Men live, but they die. *Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?* There is nothing that we behold bearing any analogy to the resurrection. We may *fancy* an analogy, as many unwise defenders of sacred writ have done, but still it is only a fancy. Correct thinking will con

vince us there is no resemblance in fact. The trees that are dead, are dead forever. Others may spring up in their places, but the fallen never rise. The graves of our fathers are not opened; we have seen no one rise again; the dead are slumbering in dust. There is, therefore, something in the resurrection of the dead wholly opposed to our natural expectations. If we believe it, we must believe on the ground of miracles; and our mind needs the most satisfactory proof.

Let us see what witnesses the Bible points out to us to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This shall be our first topic. Let us examine into the credibility of these witnesses. This shall be our second. I trust we shall find, from the examination of these two articles, that it would be a hard matter to be an infidel; that there is such testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as no mind could reject without being prepared to reject all human testimony and take refuge in the darkest shades of scepticism.

I. The number of witnesses who give testimony to any fact is a most material point. Our mind is so constituted, that we are obliged to give more weight to the testimony of many than to the testimony of one. It is more probable that a few should be false or mistaken, than that many should be so. This is a plain principle. Our mind acknowledges it, our courts act upon it.

When St. Matthew was just finishing his gospel, he introduced this most important topic. He tells us that Jesus Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and they *came and held him by the feet and worshipped him.* He tells us also, that he was seen in Galilee of the eleven disciples, when *some doubted.* I suppose the meaning is that they doubted *at first*, or when

he was some distance from them; for it is afterwards said, *he came and spake unto them*, and then, it seems, there was no doubt. It is important to notice this, as it shows us they were not credulous and ready to believe any thing, but would not believe without good and sufficient proof.

St. Mark closes his gospel with the record of the same appearances, and adds another instance: *After that he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country.*

St. Luke includes, in the last chapter of his gospel, all these instances, and relates more particularly the conversation of the risen Saviour.

St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians xv., has brought together a still greater number of witnesses, and also other instances of his appearance after his resurrection from the dead. These are his words: *He was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures;—he was seen of Cephas, and then of the twelve; after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.* (St. Paul, you perceive, was appealing to living witnesses when he wrote this. If any one *doubted*, they were alive and could be examined.) He proceeds: *After that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles, and last of all, he was seen of me also.*

St. John tells us of no other witnesses than those we have named; but what is a natural circumstance, he tells us of three different times when he appeared to his disciples. It was no hasty glance. It was no hurried interview. Even the incredulous Thomas was compelled to believe.

These are the witnesses we have to the resurrection

of Jesus Christ. Their number is more than five hundred. Had there been but few, the suspicion would have been very natural that those few might possibly have been mistaken, or that they had the intention to deceive for some selfish purpose. But since there was such a multitude, and since they had such repeated interviews, even scepticism itself cannot pretend any deception.

II. In the second place, we proposed to examine the credibility of these witnesses. Now there are six things which affect the credibility of witnesses.

1. The credibility of witnesses is affected by their capacity as men of discernment, capable of judging on the subject to which they testify. Those who are not men of sufficient discernment to understand those matters of which they give evidence, are not to be received as witnesses. I would not receive the testimony of an illiterate man on any subject in science which he could not comprehend; and I would not credit the testimony of a blind man in relation to color, nor that of a deaf man in reference to sounds. By this I do not mean that a witness must understand the *subject* to which his testimony applies, but that he must be capable of understanding the facts to which he testifies. The testimony of a man wholly ignorant of philosophy is just as sufficient to prove many philosophical facts, as if he were most deeply instructed in all the science of the schools. It is a philosophic fact that all bodies unsupported fall to the surface of the earth. The fact is one thing; the philosophy of it is quite another thing. But if one knows nothing of the philosophical explanation of it, still if he knows the fact, if he has eyes to see it and mind enough to understand that he *does* see it, his testi-

mony in regard to the fact is equally as good as that of the scholar, who is able to explain and demonstrate all the laws of gravitation.

Now the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is no complicated subject. If he was seen alive after his death, we know that he rose from the dead. Jesus Christ died. This is an acknowledged fact. The enemies of Christianity, so far from disputing it, have been fond of casting it out as a reproach to our holy religion. And the testimony of any man as to his resurrection may be received, if he is capable of judging whether one is alive or dead.

But those who saw and conversed repeatedly with Jesus Christ, after he came back from the sepulchre, were men of good understanding. They were not likely to be deceived; more, it was impossible that they should be deceived. Most of them had known Jesus Christ before he was crucified. They had been in his society, they had listened to his instructions, they had conversed familiarly with him; and when he afterwards was seen by them, surely they were capable of judging of an object of sight. The capacity of such men as Matthew, and Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, is surely the last thing to be called in question. We might as well question the capacity of this congregation to say whether they hear the words I am speaking, as to question the capacity of the witnesses I have mentioned to say whether they saw Jesus Christ after he was risen. If they had *opportunity* to know the fact of which they testify, it is enough; their *capacity* to know is beyond question.

2. The opportunity for knowing is the second thing which affects the credibility of witnesses. Men may

have different degrees of confidence on any subject, according to their opportunities for information. If I have but a distant view or a hasty glance of any object of sight, I am not so likely to be certain in relation to it as if I had a nearer approach and a longer time to behold. To render our testimony credible on any subject, we must have opportunity to know the facts of which we testify. It is not always enough that we are ourselves satisfied: we may be credulous and easily imposed upon. We must have such an opportunity to know, that with suitable attention any deception would be impossible.

Now those who testify to the resurrection of Jesus Christ had no hasty glimpse of his risen body. They saw him for a long space. They conversed with him—walked with him—ate with him. They saw him, not at a distance, but near at hand. And they were not disposed to be credulous and believe without sufficient opportunity to judge; for when they saw him at a distance and before he approached them, *they doubted.* It was only his nearer approach, their better view and more continued intercourse, that satisfied these cautious men. And one of them carried his caution and his incredulity to such an extent that he would not believe, *except he should see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side.* All this Jesus Christ granted to him, and even the incredulous Thomas was compelled to exclaim, *My Lord, and my God!* The disciples, in a body, saw Jesus three different times. The woman to whom he first showed himself after his resurrection, (as if to honor that affection which lingered around his grave,) held him by the feet. Now when witnesses have

had repeated opportunities of knowing, when they have seen and felt and heard, surely their *power* to know the truth cannot be questioned.

And what is very material as to the power of knowing or the capacity to judge, is the singular fact that they did not *expect* his resurrection. Plainly as he had prophesied it, still they did not understand his prophecy till after its fulfilment. *For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead;* and when the women who were first at the sepulchre announced to the disciples his resurrection, *their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.* His resurrection, therefore, was contrary to their expectation, and consequently they were not under the influence of strong desire and eager to believe it. Their personal *opportunity*, as well as personal *power* of judging, can not be called into question.

3. The third thing which affects the credibility of witnesses, when there is more than one witness to the same fact, is their *agreement.* When there is any contradiction or inconsistency between the testimony of different witnesses, our minds are in doubt; we know not what to believe. On the contrary, a perfect agreement strengthens our conviction. I mean, a perfect agreement as to the essential fact to which they testify. If there is a very nice and scrupulous agreement as to all the *circumstances* of the case, as to all those little things to which the attention is not called but which are remembered, as it were, by accident, this sometimes creates a suspicion of previous concert, of conspiracy together to testify to the same thing. We *expect* men to differ somewhat in reference to such things, because they are not subjects of attention but rather matters of casual in-

pression, and we expect the casual impressions of men to be somewhat different: a principle well understood in the best courts of justice.

Now these witnesses unanimously testify that they saw Jesus Christ alive after he had been crucified. If their testimony is false, then there was a company of more than five hundred impostors, all perfectly agreeing in their testimony. Who can believe that such a numerous company, of such different age and capacity and disposition, so widely separated as some of them were from each other, would so perfectly agree in maintaining a falsehood, and not one of them ever disclose the imposition? Had they been base enough to conceive such an imposition, surely some of them would afterwards have disclosed it, when motives as powerful as the dungeon and the stake were urging them to it. But no Christian retracted his testimony—no Christian disclosed the imposture—no Christian saved his life by convicting his accomplices.

4. The *time* of bearing witness is the fourth thing which affects the credibility of witnesses. The memory of man is treacherous. Many things float over it, and are gone. Not only so, but lapse of time disarranges it, and spreads confusion where once there was order. Not only so, but the indistinctness of years gives rise to error; and as we frequently contemplate in connexion what *was* and what *might* have been, we are exposed to mingle fancies with facts, and to render ourselves incapable of distinguishing between them.

But the resurrection of Jesus Christ was no complicated subject. Had these witnesses seen him? Had they conversed with him? Had they been with him in the house at meat, or by the way in conversation?

Nothing can be more simple than the subject of their testimony, which admits of no mistake from the imbecility of memory, or from confusion in recollection. Besides, their testimony was given at the time. No lapse of years had spread its shades over their memory, and thrown the story into partial oblivion.

Again: the time of giving this testimony is incompatible with the supposition that it was not an honest testimony. The enemies of Jesus Christ had just triumphed. Proud of their success, they were rendered doubly bold against all who confessed him, while as yet Jewish malignity had lost none of its bitterness. His foes were yet burning in anger, and their hands were still wet with his blood. At this very period, while his enemies were triumphant and furious and vigilant, while they were yet watching to give the last, finishing stroke, —at this very time, within three days after his death, his disciples announced his resurrection. Does this look like dishonesty? Has it the aspect of imposition? Artful men, determined to give currency to a falsehood, would have chosen a more favorable time to spread the report. They would have delayed till vigilance was released, fury appeased, and suspicion lulled to sleep. And they might have presented a most urgent reason for doing so:—they might have pointed to the Sanhedrim boiling with rage, and to Calvary still moist with his blood. But they made no delay. They announced the resurrection of Jesus at the very time when his enemies were expecting the declaration, and had taken all possible measures to prevent its being believed. If their seal and stone upon his sepulchre, and the watch that guarded it, had kept his mangled body in their possession, they might have produced it, and would have done so

in order to crush the attempt of the disciples whom they hated, and the religion which their wickedness could not endure. But instead of this, they gave large sums of money to the Roman soldiery, to say to the common people that *the disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept:* a testimony not likely to be believed, since it was death for a Roman soldier to slumber on his watch, and since one could not be supposed to have very accurate knowledge of what was transpiring while he was asleep. If the soldiers were sleeping, how could they know that the disciples stole him away? This is the only instance I know of, where men have deposed to that which was done while they were asleep. We find no such inconsistencies in the testimony of those who bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

5. The fifth circumstance which affects the credibility of witnesses, is the *place* in which they give their testimony. The exaggerated tales of travellers have long been the subject of common remark. The wonders they pretend to announce to us are in distant lands. They are separated from us by pathless oceans and mountains of fearful height. It is difficult to detect the falsehood, or to discover the truth, when the testimony is given in a place far distant from the scene of the transactions that are told. This difficulty of discovery sometimes emboldens base men to violate the truth. But it was in no distant region that our witnesses told of the resurrection of Christ. They published it at Jerusalem; they preached it in the temple, in the streets, in the synagogues. They gave forth their testimony just by the grave of Jesus and on the hill of Calvary. They gave it in the presence of his murderers; and Christianity began her triumphs on

the very spot, where mistake or imposture must have failed.

6. The last circumstance we name as affecting the credibility of witnesses, is the motives which induce them to testify. One whose personal interest is to be secured by the establishment of the things to which he testifies, is not considered so credible a witness as one whose interest is not involved. The reason is obvious. All men are, in some sense, selfish. To promote their own interest, they may be induced, in some cases, to bear false witness. We have seen too much of the weakness of human virtue and the power of self-interest, to entertain the opinion that *all* men are *likely* to speak the truth when interest seems to require falsehood. We are fully persuaded that men *have* preferred, and men may again prefer, their temporal interests to their salvation, so far as to depose falsely, even in the name of that God who has said, *All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.*

But it is self-interest alone that can induce men to testify falsely. Men deceive to promote their own purposes. Their designs may be vastly different: one may have purposes of wealth; another, of pride; another, of ambition; another, of pleasure; but still it is only self-interest, only the preference of present objects to those of another world, which can induce them to testify falsely.

Now on the principles of infidelity, *i. e.*, on the supposition that these witnesses bore false testimony, there is something that can never be explained. Let the infidel tell me how it is, that more than five hundred men could be induced to sacrifice their dearest temporal

interests for the propagation of a falsehood. Their testimony gained them nothing in this world; and surely no man could even imagine that God would be better pleased with him for imposition and fraud and deception. Their testimony cost them all the severities of malignant persecution. The most vigorous punishments were inflicted upon them; jails were filled, chains forged, fires kindled around their consuming bodies; and, if they were false witnesses, they must have endured all this for no other purpose than to offend God and plunge themselves into hell.

Moreover, if they were false, why, among such a multitude and under such circumstances, was there no contradiction detected and no recantation made? They were examined by their enemies,—men of office, and talent, and discrimination, men capable of tearing off the disguise in which falsehood arrays itself, and of putting to blush dishonesty and deception. And yet there was no contradiction among the whole multitude. And as to their recantation, every man will confess it must have been expected, if they had been false. Had some plan of self-interest induced them to commence a deception, had they expected thereby to gain some temporal advantage, surely they would not have persisted in it when they saw the attempt vain, their expectations frustrated, and found themselves languishing in dungeons, or expiring in flames. Bring a false witness to face death; let him look upon the implements of his execution; show him his coffin, and wrap him in his grave-clothes; and then,—while he turns pale and trembles at the sight, let him consider that the confession of his falsehood will rescue him, and *not* to confess it will only take him through the agonies of death, into the

presence of an awful God, offended with his falsehood, —the false witness will retract; he will confess his falsehood; he will not persist in his perjury when he can have no motive for it but agony, and death, and hell. But, these witnesses which we have mentioned made no retraction. Standing by the stake, they reiterated their testimony with their last breath, and were ushered into the presence of God,—*Jesus and the resurrection* on their lips.

Never was there a fact substantiated by more unquestionable proof than that which the resurrection of Jesus Christ possesses. The mind that can reject such testimony never can be convinced by any testimony of the human race.

This resurrection is a most consolatory truth to the believer. The faith of the Christian makes him one with Jesus Christ, and he learns to realize the blessedness of the hope that *them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

The resurrection of the dead is a doctrine peculiar to our religion. Whatever faint notions of it the heathen may ever have entertained, they were all borrowed from the revelation of God. The most polished and enlightened heathen that have lived, have been in darkness as to this interesting topic. Even if they believed in the immortality of the soul, they had no ideas about the resurrection of the dead. The Roman and the Greek went down into the grave as if its bars were eternal. But Christianity unlocks the sepulchre. Angels in shining garments awake the dead. *This corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality.*

How perfect is the triumph of our religion! There is something awful, dreadful in the dissolution of the body

Death is the dread of nature. Every beast fears it. Every bird shrinks from it. They utter no other cry so piercing as their death-cry. The fear of death seems to awaken in all living creatures the most tormenting distress. And when I think of my own dissolution,—when I say to myself, These limbs shall stiffen—this tongue shall falter—the blood shall curdle in my veins,—I seem to be contemplating the most distressing subject. My coffin! my funeral! my grave!—I shudder at them! But Jesus Christ flings glory across the gloom. *He* wore grave-clothes, and hallowed the dress of the dead. *He* went down into the sepulchre, and softened and sanctified the bed of the believer.

The believer, then, sinner as he is, may glory in Jesus Christ. He may say to himself, Let this body die,—let it be hidden in darkness and moulder into dust: it belongs to Jesus Christ; he has made it the *temple of the Holy Ghost:* true, he will take down this tabernacle, but he will build it again; *in my flesh shall I see God.*

Yes, the believer *may* triumph in Christ. As death makes inroads upon his Christian society, as those who love our Lord are, one after another, taken away from his earthly fellowship, still he may console himself with the hopes of the resurrection. He may say, *Let* my friends fall around me—let me receive their last sigh and close their dying eyes—let me follow to the grave the sweetest solace of my life: she who was my joy in sorrow, my star in darkness; who watched around my sick-bed; whose kindness took from languishing its discouragement, and from anguish its keenness; she who walked life's vale with me, hand in hand, she must go down to the grave in silence!—but *Lazarus,*

my friend, sleepeth,—if I believe, I shall see the salvation of God.

My dear friends, let your hearts be cheered with the consolations of Jesus Christ. You honor him most when you have the brightest ideas of his mercy. Let your hearts be filled with his love. And if there is one poor, broken-hearted sinner really contrite before God, but who yet fears and doubts and is distressed, I would say to him,—*Fear not, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Oh! Jesus Christ is richer in goodness than the most affectionate of us have believed. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God.*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the finishing stroke in the work of redemption. The ransom of the sinner was paid; the Father had accepted it; the Holy Ghost was ready to confirm it, sealing the promise on the heart of the believer; and Jesus Christ had come back from the grave, its conqueror, and laden with spoils. Now there is freedom of access to God. No flaming cherubim guard the mercy-seat. It is sprinkled over with the blood of the Saviour of the world. Let that blood be sprinkled on your conscience, and your covenant with God is sealed.

But the resurrection accords with the whole economy of God. It is a lesson of holiness, a fountain flowing with motives for all godly living. It demands of those who would have part in Christ's resurrection, to come to this holy ordinance and partake of these august emblems, saying, in their hearts, to God,—*I am crucified with Christ; the love of Christ constraineth me, because I thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead; and*

that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves—(what an unbounded *charter* of *himself* the believer gives to Jesus Christ!) he repeats, *that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.* This is the language with which you should adopt this ordinance. It is the lesson of holiness and consecration, gathered from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I hope you are prepared to enter into this sentiment. You ought now to surrender yourself to him just as perfectly as you would desire to be his in that Day when the trump of the archangel shall announce the resurrection of the dead; when you shall come forth from the darkness of the opened grave, and hear Jesus Christ proclaiming from the clouds, *I am the resurrection and the life.* Come to his Table with such a sentiment, and then indeed will your covenant be ratified and your consecration accepted of God.

My dear brethren, we are going, this afternoon, to celebrate the dying love of our now risen Saviour. We ought to do it in such a manner as to give us better preparation to die, and to rise and be with him. In order to do so, let us remember *why* he died. Let us say, as we approach the Lord's table,—He died to save this poor, guilty soul! I was under the curse of God. Divine justice demanded my destruction. My sins were sinking me to ruin. I deserved hell, and my immortal soul must have been forever miserable, had not the Saviour died! Blessed, blessed Master! *He* saved me! Poor sinner that I was, I could do nothing for myself. *He* loved me! *He* bore my sins! He took my place, and it was for me that the strokes of divine

justice fell upon his holy head. He died, and has risen again. God has accepted the sacrifice, and I am coming to his Table to signify that I accept it too. Let us remember *who* it was that died. Not a mere man: such a sacrifice and Saviour would never do for sinners like us. It was *Emmanuel,—God with us.* He it is that covers our persons with his own, that the strokes of divine wrath may reach him without falling on us. Let sin, therefore, be what it may; let divine justice be what it may; let the black guilt of this poor, hopeless spirit be what it may, I know there is forgiveness; for the eternal Son of God, who travelled in the *greatness of his strength*, can respond to all there can be in the depths of my iniquity and in the depths of the Deity who is offended with it. Let us remember the *love* which prompted his death. It was love that brought him from heaven. Say to yourself as you come to his Table, He *loved me and gave himself a ransom for me.* I see proofs of his love scattered all along, from his manger-cradle to his marble tomb.

Let us remember him with hearts overflowing with gratitude and love. Let us say, His *grace* has bidden us to his *banqueting-house.* A little while ago, we were *enemies to God.* Our affections were on the world. We saw *no beauty* in Christ. If God had hurried us out of the world in a state of unrepented sin; if he had not snatched us, *as brands from the burning*, we might, instead of coming to his Table in peace and love and joy with the people of God, have been even now bound in the chains of darkness and everlasting despair. Grace, grace has saved us! My *soul is satisfied.* Christ has died—Christ is risen again. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.*

XI.

Wounded for our Transgressions.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."—Isaiah liii. 5.

THE chapter from which these words are taken contains a very full account of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and the design of those sufferings. So plainly and so fully are his trials and agonies here described, that the description seems more like a history written after that great event than like a prophecy foretelling it. The whole circumstances of the case are so minutely described, that one would suppose Isaiah must have mingled in the school of Jesus Christ with his disciples, when he was on earth, and must have stood on the top of Calvary in that dark hour when Jesus Christ expired. But Isaiah was dead and gone long before Jesus Christ was born; his body had gone down to the dust, and his soul was mingling with disembodied spirits in the eternal world. But he did not depart from this house of his pilgrimage before God had shown him the great plan of redemption, and caused him to write this chapter so full of instruction for your heart and mind. He commences with a lamentation which the ministers of

Jesus Christ are forced to make, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Isaiah had preached about a coming Saviour, but he mourns that so few had believed on him. He appears to turn away from the wicked world, disheartened, and sighing over the hardness of poor, perishing sinners; and when he could get no comfort from man, he carries back his complaint and pours his tears into the bosom of his God: *Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Ministers of Jesus Christ now are often forced to the same sad office; they unfold the counsel of God, they tell of *Jesus Christ and him crucified*, they see around them many unbelieving sinners, for whose salvation they have preached and prayed and wept, and when the heart is sinking under the thought that those loved ones will be lost, they turn away to their Master with the sad complaint, *Who hath believed our report?*

The prophet goes on to mention the unreasonable rejection of the Saviour. Sinners do not see him to be such a Saviour as they need. *For he shall grow up as a tender plant.* The Jews expected him to come in great pomp and power, and restore to their nation its temporal prosperity; and *as a root out of a dry ground*, he was born in a low condition, and laid in a manger. *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* was the sneering interrogation of those he came to redeem. They would as soon expect a plant to flourish on an arid soil, moistened by no timely showers, as expect deliverance and redemption from one born, like Jesus, in exile, humiliation, and scorn. *He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.* Just so, many of these poor sinners

think. They see no excellency in Jesus Christ. He was the mock and scorn of the world. He was a kind of outcast from human society, and *had not where to lay his head;* and then he was arrested as a malefactor, and crucified among thieves. And there is a pride of heart in the unconverted sinner which cannot bear to be humbled down before such a Saviour, and take redemption as a gift, and not a deserving—and take it from him whose act of procurement reminds them that they deserve hell instead of heaven. *He is despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Foolish, guilty, dying sinners reject Jesus Christ now just as they did then. The obstinacy of the Jew is acted over again. How many of us here are rejecting his salvation! How many of our hearts here are untouched, unmelted by his mercy! Hearer, this Saviour died for you! He stood in your law-place and bore your law-penalty. His sufferings were strictly vicarious, and not merely exhibitory of God's hatred of sin. And you, every hardened sinner among you, if you only saw in just conviction your character and guiltiness, would see also your need of his sacrifice. Linked together in human minds are difficulties on the atonement and defects of conviction of sin. Rely upon it, whenever any of us sinners sees his true character, he will see that he needs something more than plans, and exhibits, and demonstrations, to save him. He will know well that he needs a friend to stand in his place, to bear his burden, and just conviction will put into his lips that song of the sacrament, "For thee, my soul, for thee!" True conviction leads to just conceptions of the

atonement. Christ died for you. He offers to save you. He calls on you to trust in him. And though your stout heart rejects him, I tell you, *surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.* In him we may have all our hearts can desire. Let us not imitate the folly of his murderers; they esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Because he was given over into the hands of his enemies to die, they imagined that God was his foe, or that he suffered just as other men suffered, by misfortune or crime. But they were mistaken. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement* necessary to procure *our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

This is the strain in which Isaiah preached about Jesus Christ. And it cannot fail to strike you that the gospel is the same now that it was then. All those saints that have been gathered from this wicked world into heaven have been saved, just as we must be saved, by the blood of atonement. They have gone up to glory, in every age, from the days of Abel until now. Some have gone from these seats, and may now be looking down from heaven upon those they knew on earth, to see if they love Jesus Christ, and are about to

celebrate his dying love. None have been saved, and none can be saved, except through him *who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.*

We come here to-day to engage in the most solemn, most sweet, most interesting business that I know of, on this side of eternity. There is nothing else which ought so to affect our hearts as the ordinance of the Lord's supper. This institution brings to mind all our misery, all our salvation. It places before us the august emblems of our crucified Master, and calls us to pronounce over his broken body and shed blood the sacramental vow. It is, therefore, one of the most affecting solemnities in which we shall ever be engaged till we get to heaven. Let us endeavor to prepare our hearts for it, while, without speculation and with as much simplicity as we can, we attend to the two great ideas of the text.

I. Our sins.
II. The sufferings of Jesus Christ to atone for them.

I. It is proper to enter fully into the consideration of our sins, for unless we come to this sacrament as sinners; unless we come here with penitent, broken, and contrite hearts; unless we come here with that deep humiliation which empties us of self, we shall fail of entering into the meaning of our ordinance, or holding communion with our Saviour. The Jews ate their passover with bitter herbs to remind them of the bitterness of that bondage from which they had been delivered, and of the haste with which they had been obliged to flee out of Egypt when they had not had time to gather that which would be more agreeable to the taste. Our ordinance should remind us of a bondage more cruel than Egyp-

tian, and teach us, too, that this is not our rest, for our home is in heaven.

First, then, the number of our sins. Quicken, disciple of Jesus Christ! quicken your recollection. Go back to the years of your childhood and youth. Let busy memory call up from forgotten years the thousand sins which time has almost worn from the brain. How early you went astray! How obstinately you sinned against instruction! How often, when you resolved on reformation, did you yield to the next allurement, and forget your vows! The very scenes against which reason and conscience, and even the Holy Spirit, cautioned you, soon witnessed again your presence, your levity, your sin! How many Sabbaths you violated! how many sermons were lost upon you! how many mornings and evenings passed away and no prayer went up from your heart to heaven! Think not that we are preaching too severe a morality. You owe every moment of your existence to the Supreme Being, and if you spend one moment undirected by his law, you sin and you are guilty. We make a great mistake when our vain hearts flatter us that God only requires some of our time, some of our talents, some of our heart, and leaves us at liberty to bestow the rest as we choose. We have not such a God to rule us. The God of the Bible claims all that we are. Jesus Christ claims us as the purchase of his blood; the Holy Spirit claims to rule and sanctify us, to dwell in our hearts, our very *bodies becoming temples of the Holy Ghost.* And since all our conduct should be regulated by the great principle of obedience to God, of what untold iniquities have we been guilty as we have been moving on in disobedience! As we look back on our life, recollection fails us, and

well may we say with the psalmist, *Who can understand his errors?* As we attempt, by a kind of sacred arithmetic, to cast up the full number of our sins, we are lost in the multitude, and can only cry out, like David, *O Lord, let thy loving-kindness preserve me, for innumerable evils have compassed me about; they are more in number than the hairs of my head.* As we look into the heart, especially as it is while unsanctified by the Holy Spirit, we are compelled to exclaim, *Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually; our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.*

Surely our hearts should be affected with the *number* of our sins. Had we sinned but once, the law of God would have condemned us, and we could not have justified ourselves. But we have sinned times without number; *our sins are more than the hairs of our head;* no mind confined in this prison of clay, can tell over all our sins, no arithmetic but that of eternity can calculate their amount!

I have sometimes endeavored to aid myself on this article, and school my heart rightly, by attempting to conceive what I should be thinking of if I should spend the coming centuries of my eternity in hell. I know I deserve to do so. Even now, as I know the God of justice, and by the light of his character get some glimpses of my own, I do well know that I have sinned enough to call forth the deep damnation of his wrath! Nothing, nothing but grace, rich grace can save me! But if I were lost, if I were to spend millions on millions of ages in eternity, thinking how I came to my hopeless doom, what amazing recollections would overwhelm me. I should remember sins which now have escaped me. I

should remember my childhood and youth. In those sunny years, what foolish guiltiness I perpetrated! what anger and envy and malice towards my little companions! what unkindness towards my brothers and sisters! what disobedience to my parents! what deep plunges into wild and wicked pleasures! I should remember the bustle and ambition of manhood. Craving covetousness would not let me find time to pray. The bright morning of God dawned on me year after year. I could go forth under his sun, and breathe his air, and tread on his earth, and spend the very powers of mind he gave me, and the very vigor he put into my muscles, sinning against him. I should remember lost Sabbaths—seasons of warning, illness and danger—seasons of stifled conviction, when my heart resisted the Holy Ghost, who aimed to keep me from hell—sermons which half converted me—and ministers of God who tried to save me as *a brand plucked from the burning.* I should remember how God's patience bore with me; and from his justice, his kindness, his purity, his Christ, and his communions, I should swell the catalogue of recollections to deepen the amazements of a hopeless perdition. But I cannot bear this conception! Away, away, anticipated perdition! The number of my sins is well known to my God, and all I would do with their inconceivable amount is to let them swell the gratitude of this heart that One able to bear them all was *wounded for my transgressions;* and if I believe, *because he lives* even *I shall live also.*

2. There is an enormity in our sins which we ought to remember. The undisturbed sinner, moving on in his career of carlessness, does not realize the great evil of the sins he commits. He thinks of transgression against God as a trifle. He flatters himself that he is not

very guilty. To be sure, he will acknowledge that he has fallen into some slight errors, and perhaps that he has committed many little offences. But the real nature of sin is hidden from him; his deceitful, *desperately wicked* heart has hidden it. He will not open his eyes to look upon it as it is, and as God tells him it is. One in his carelessness is apt to think of an offence against God very much as he would think of an offence against his equal, if, indeed, he does not think less of it, and feel less guilty for it. But this is not the rule of righteousness. We should measure the enormity of our sin by the evil of it; and we should measure the evil of it by the majesty of the Deity we have offended, and by the eternity of that punishment which God pronounces over it.

The majesty, the excellence, the holiness of the God we have offended should teach us the magnitude of our sins. Every sin is open rebellion against the spotless Jehovah. It is lifting up the arm against the Deity. It is saying to God, We will not obey! It is an offence against every perfection that adorns the Godhead, an attack upon every attribute of Deity. Men are wont to proportion their respect, in some degree, according to their estimation of the character of those to whom they render it. They have more respect for a good man than for a bad man. And when they behold any individual abusing, insulting, and vilifying a man of exalted excellence and worth, they cannot but look upon that individual as showing a most unworthy disposition; they estimate the badness of his disposition in some measure according to the excellence and worth which his disposition abuses. They would not think him so bad if he only disregarded and abused a man possessing one degree of merit; but when the man possessing two, or

ten, or a thousand degrees of merit does not command his respect, they behold in him a superior degree of baseness and impudence. Let them apply the same rule to their sins. These sins are an offence against the Deity; they are impudence and insulting rebellion against God. All the perfection and excellencies of the adorable Jehovah are not sufficient to restrain the sinner; he disregards and sins against them all. The excellence of the Godhead, therefore, should measure the enormity of sin. And hence, when the eyes of the sinner are opened, when his attention is arrested by the Holy Spirit, when he comes to the light and sees himself as he is, we find him estimating sin by a new standard; we find him distressed because God is offended, because he has sinned against such unequalled goodness. Oh! it is the blaze of God's purity that troubles him; and the cry bursts from his lips, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. O Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against* THEE.

Yes, it is the excellence of God himself that should measure the enormity of sin. It is not an equal that is offended, it is the *holy, holy Lord God.* Genuine conviction by the Holy Ghost is distinguished from the alarms of mere natural conscience, by taking its light and guidance from the character of God.

But perhaps some of you will better conceive of the greatness of sin by the evil—I mean the misery—it produces. God says, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* He has explained to us what he means by this; not that its existence shall cease, but that the miseries it shall endure will be so great that they are truly described by the awful agonies of dissolution. Sin is death. It is the utter loss of all spiritual life, all affections pleasing to

God, all feelings capable of being happy in the presence of God and in serving him. And the awful end to which this spiritual death is conducting the unconverted sinner is described by *going away into everlasting punishment*—by *flames of torment*—by *blackness of darkness*—by *the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never quenched.* I know that our minds are apt to recoil from such descriptions; still, God has written them. And they mean misery—unequalled and eternal misery. You may measure, therefore, the magnitude of sin by the depth and eternity of this wretchedness. Stretch your imagination! measure the soul's immortality; follow the lost spirit onward from age to age; behold its capacities ever expanding, its miseries ever deepening, its eternity never, never ending; and when you have measured its infinity and its eternity of wretchedness, you will have the measure of this enormous evil.

I know that a deceitful heart often flatters us that we are not great sinners, and deserving of great condemnation. But this vain flattery would cease, if we would honestly examine our own hearts, and earnestly pray to God to preserve us from delusion. Only those persons who seldom examine themselves, seldom try themselves by the word of God, and seldom pray to God for wisdom, imagine their sins are small.

3. The motives which induce us to sin are a foundation for deeper penitence and humility.

There would be no end to an enumeration of the various motives which have led us to transgression. But put them all together, think of every enjoyment that you have promised yourself, of every hope you have indulged, and every sinful pleasure you have gained, or can ever gain, and what is the amount of all? Vanity,

nothing but vanity! *Threescore years and ten* will sweep them all aside. The motives to sin are therefore very weak, but the motives to holiness swell beyond all human conception. Heaven is full of them. Eternity measures them, and the soul's immortality alone can realize them. Behold then the folly of the sinner while he will not forsake his sins! He prefers earth to heaven, values time more than eternity, and forfeits the bliss of eternal ages for the vanities of an expiring life! Surely the small motives there are to sin, contrasted with the immense motives to holiness, manifest a guilt of the heart which ought to fill our souls with the deepest contrition.

4. There is one more article which should influence our penitence. It is the effect our sins have had on others. Sin is a contagious evil: *one sinner destroyeth much good.* We are so situated in human society that we cannot avoid holding an influence over one another. Are you a father? Your children will be influenced by your example. If no altar is reared in your house on which to offer the daily sacrifices of a pious heart, your children will have little respect for prayers and devotement to God, and your family, which ought to be a nursery of piety, will be apt to become a school of carelessness and sin: your children will be emboldened by your example to neglect their Maker, and your sin will tend to produce a double destruction, that of your own soul and theirs. And so of all other relations: mothers and sisters, friends, brothers, are exerting an influence of everlasting importance. And when we review our life, what an amount of pernicious example and influence do we find. Had we destroyed ourselves only, the evil would not have been so lamentable. But we have dragged others into the same gulf wherein we have so

thoughtlessly precipitated ourselves! This thought should deepen our contrition, and pour a holier earnestness into our prayers for their salvation.

But it would be vain to attempt the enumeration of all the unhappy characteristics of our sins. Suffice it to say that our sins have flung our souls into ruins, they have rendered us altogether helpless, and in ourselves as hopeless as if the death-knell of the soul were rung, and the execution of eternal punishment begun.

II. But *he was wounded for* my *transgressions.* Jesus Christ helped us when we could not help ourselves. It was his sacrifice that appeased our offended God. The blood of atonement has been shed, and now we can stand here and say, *God can be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.* This is the consolation of the gospel; this is the triumph of redeeming mercy. And is not this another argument for penitential sorrow? Who can contemplate his sins as the cause of the agonies that Jesus suffered, and not be compelled to view them as more evil than he ever viewed them before! Who can thus contemplate them, and not humble himself before God to a lower depth, and send up a more piercing cry to heaven! Who can look on *him whom* he has *pierced,* and not *mourn and be in bitterness as one is in bitterness for a first-born!* There is no spot where penitence gains its perfection, save at the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is when the tears of contrition mingle with the blood of Jesus that the soul of the sinner is released from its burden, and he learns how blessed it is to repent. Before he comes to the blood of atonement, fear agitates him, guilt distresses him, remorse consumes him; but when he looks upon his dying Saviour, goodness, grace, love, mercy, melt him as he loves to repent.

But more particularly,

1. In the sacrifice of Christ the pardon of sin is secured. The poor sinner might have spent his days in grief, and his nights in remorse; the morning might have witnessed his sighs, and the evening his lamentations; and even his eternity might have rolled on its ages of misery,—and still, still not one sin would have been blotted out, or one stain washed from his soul.

2. In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the justice of God is satisfied. Let that holy perfection claim what it may, Jesus Christ has *magnified the law and made it honorable.* When the guilty sinner had forfeited the life of his soul, when this holy perfection of the Deity was arrayed against him, when the arm of justice was ready to descend, Jesus Christ flung himself beneath the blow, and the sword of divine justice was bathed in his blood. Verily, *he was bruised for our iniquities.*

3. In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ an everlasting righteousness is procured for the sinner. Place me in heaven clad in my own righteousness alone, and I could not remain there; those holy scenes and that holy society would spurn me from their embrace. But give me a Saviour's righteousness, and, firm as stands Gabriel upon the battlements of heaven, I, sinner as I am, can stand beside him.

4. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ has obtained that grace which subdues the heart. The effect of our transgression is to render us no less obstinate than guilty. The heart of sin is a hard heart. Nothing can soften it into relentings but the blood of Jesus. The sinner might spend all his days, exert all his energies, and give himself to the object with a devotement that should know neither weariness nor limitation, and after all he

could not soften down the unrelenting hardness of his heart, nor bring one feeling into subjection to the love of God; but when he throws himself at the foot of the Cross, Jesus Christ saves him, his heart softens, peace comes over his soul, and for the first time he is reconciled to God, and reconciled to himself. Human hearts never become better without faith.

The ordinance you contemplate calls you to enter these two articles—your own guilt and helplessness as a sinner, and the full redemption of a crucified Saviour. God, in this institution, would have you sink self and exalt your Saviour. You come here to confess that you deserve nothing but the eternal wrath of God, and to feel that God freely gives you eternal felicity. You come here to acknowledge you were a poor outcast, a helpless sinner, and to feel that you are made a child of God, an heir of glory. In one word, you come here to swear allegiance to Jesus Christ; to say that *you are not your own, you are bought with a price;* to consecrate, over these sacred symbols of a dying Saviour, both your bodies and your souls to God. Are you ready to enter into the oath of the covenant? Does your whole soul welcome this solemn transaction, which surrenders everything to Jesus Christ? Enter into the meaning of this ordinance, *This do in remembrance of me.* Recollect that course of holy obedience which Jesus Christ pursued. See him an outcast, and scorn of sinners! Behold him led away from the hall of Pilate, scourged and insulted and vilified! Go walk beside him as he climbs the hill of Calvary, his body bending beneath the weight of his own Cross, and his soul sinking beneath the still heavier burden of your sins and mine! Go stand on the hill of crucifixion, when an earthquake

rocks your steps, when the graves open and the dead come forth, when the sun takes in his beams, and darkness hangs like a pall upon the skies, as if heaven had hung on mourning because Jesus Christ must die!

And when you have witnessed that last agony of Christ, and heard him cry, *My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?* then say to yourself, All this was done for the redemption of this poor guilty soul.

Surely love and humility should blend sweetly their influences, as you remember Jesus Christ. The tears of penitence should mingle with the tears of joy.

Jesus expects you to devote yourself wholly to him, as you come to this holy ordinance. He expects to have you say, Here, crucified Saviour, I cast myself on thy mercy. I surrender myself to thy grace. I give my body and my soul to thee! Come to this Table with such a dedication, and you will go away with the mark of God upon you. Then earth cannot claim you, death cannot injure you, the grave cannot hold you, for Jesus Christ is yours, and you are his.

And let me ask you, as you handle these consecrated symbols—let me ask you to send up one prayer to heaven for those dear friends who are yet in their sins. Pray, oh! pray for them. They know not the love of Jesus, their hearts are not sprinkled with his blood, they cannot enter into the meaning of this joyful solemnity. Pray for them, that the next time we celebrate this dying love of Christ they may say, We too will go with you, for *he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.*

But we cannot thus summarily dismiss this subject. We have mentioned the number of our sins, their enormity, their contemptible motives, and their effect upon

others. Over against them we have placed the ideas that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ secures the pardon of sin, satisfies the justice of God, brings in an everlasting righteousness, and procures, when accepted by faith, a grace which subdues the heart of sinners. Both these classes of ideas ought to have a very sensible effect upon you at the communion-table.

You do not know—in this world you never can know—all the evil of sin, but as you lift the emblems of the crucifixion, strive to have some just impressions of your own unworthiness. You were a lost sinner. God was offended. The pit yawned, and you were hasting towards its opened mouth. All there was in God was against you, except his redeeming love. Say, then, what place of humility is low enough for you! what sackcloth you ought to put on! what ideas of your own meanness and guilt ought to overwhelm your understanding! Shall pride, or prayerlessness, or selfishness, or self-righteousness be allowed to have place any longer in your heart? By the broken bread, by the flowing wine, sacred emblems of an adorable love, I conjure you, put far from you every disposition of self-consequence and self-exaltation; put before your mind the God you offended, the improprieties you perpetrated, the hardness of your heart, the blindness of your understanding, the obstinacy of your will, and above all, your lack of love and service of God since you professed to take Christ as your Redeemer and Master. Let such ideas fill you with humiliation and shame, and holy purposes to love and serve God better, down to the last breath of life.

You know not, my hearers,—in this world you never will know,—the full of those benefits which abound to you through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You need

blended faith and love to make your sentiments comport with your solemnity. Without them, I charge you, touch not that bread! lift not that cup! But, if you cordially trust in Christ, and love him, appropriate to yourself from the fountain of redemption all you want. You want much.

You, a sinner, undertake to meet God at his Table. You undertake, worm, wicked, dust and ashes as you are, you undertake to commune with the *King of kings and Lord of lords.* In the name of his eternal majesty, by the blood of his smitten Son, we bid your faith and love welcome into his holy presence-chamber. Be not afraid! God will love you as tenderly as you can love him.

Since you hoped in his mercy you remember a host of failings, unfaithfulness, impatience, coldness in prayer, lack of brotherly affection, vain thoughts, worldliness; and as these things come up in recollection, even while your face is towards the communion-table, you are tempted to turn away. Conscience whispers, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily,*—and your bleeding heart would give ten thousand worlds for a moment of communing courage! Alas! my unworthiness, my unworthiness! Trembler, I am glad you feel so. Now, I can say to you, *The bruised reed will he not break; the smoking flax will he not quench.* Your longing for communion with God, mingled with a sense of your unworthiness, makes all the worthiness of Christ your own.

But the failures of the past bear dismally on the thoughts of the future. You are afraid, in this wicked world, beset with snares, tempted of the devil, allured by enticing companionship, and exposed to fiery trials,—you are afraid your weak heart will fail, to the dishonor

of your profession and your God! I am glad of it. Now, I can say to you, *Fear not, thou worm Jacob! I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the winds shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel.* Christian! remember, at the Table of God, that the Lord your Redeemer is also the Lord your strength.

There is one thing more. Your heart can never rise to the measure of your felicity till you feel your relationship to death and heaven. You are in the world—you will soon pass out of it. You are among the living—you will soon be mingled with the dead. A bed of languishing, dissolving nature, and the *dark valley* are before you. But, leaning on him who hath destroyed that enemy who had the power of death, you may bid defiance to the King of Terrors. A mansion is prepared for you, *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* You are to see God face to face. You are to be like him. You are to *enter into the joy of your Lord.* You are to dwell among saints and angels. Earth, sin, temptation, fear, trial, left forever behind, you are to be eternally happy in the unmeasurable love of God. Anticipate that happiness now; enlarge your heart to the dimensions of that love. The song in heaven is the same as your own. Surely, if you can sing nothing else, you can sing over this sacrifice that anthem of heaven, *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

XII.

Believers Stablished in Christ.

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."—2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

FOR a purpose which we need not now notice, St. Paul here speaks of the security and privileges of Christians. They are *stablished in Christ;* God hath *stablished* them. He hath *anointed* them, *sealed* them, given them *the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts.*

This is a part of religious experience. What God has given they have realized. The realization, the experience, hath confirmed them; and therefore, to them, all there is embodied in the principles, the hopes, the promises of their religion is *yea and amen* in Christ Jesus. They are *stablished in Christ*, confirmed, assured of his truth and grace. This is the general sense of the text. Every soul that hath made trial of faith knows this. The *new creature in Christ*, the soul *born of the Spirit*, has experiences in spiritual matters which (in whatever else they may fail) never fail in this, that they always keep him convinced of the reality of experimental religion; of the fact that there is such a thing as a change of heart, a renovation of soul by the Holy

Spirit. This conviction, I say, is stable in regenerated souls.

To this conviction, fixed and rendered unalterable by experience, the divine writers often appeal. They argue with a believer, persuade him, exhort him, instruct him on this principle. They expect him to understand things which a *natural* man does not. They expect him, as *a new creature*, to have the qualities of a new creature, and to be *stablished* (among other things) on principles peculiar to his renovated and spiritual nature. This is the general remark we make on this text.

And we need nothing further, nothing beyond this general sense of the text, and this general remark upon it, to introduce the plan of the sermon we preach from it. The plan is this:

I. To remove a difficulty (if folly and obstinacy in the hearer do not keep the truths we shall utter from his mind) which sometimes occurs respecting the method in which a believer is established in his confidence, and consequent hope and peace in his religion.

II. To examine the metaphors employed in the text, fix their sense, and thus still further unfold its meaning. *Anointed* is a figurative word; *unction* is another; *earnest* is another. We must explain them.

III. To enter more deeply into the subject-matter of the text, the extent of the special ideas contained in it, as we explain the spiritual and real meaning of its figures.

IV. To ask you to make application of this truth to your own hearts, for the occasion whose solemnities await you. We will blend this last matter with the others.

We enter upon the first head.

I. The desirableness of having lived in the first age of Christianity is an idea which has occurred to many a serious mind. In that age, such wonders would have been enough for the satisfaction of any open beholder. Nothing was wanting for the confirmation of Christianity. Miracles the most wonderful attested it. Men born blind were made to see. The maimed were made whole. Fevers fled at the touch of Jesus Christ and his disciples. The earth shook, the dead lived again, and Ananias and Sapphira fell dead at the apostles' feet, and such things were then done as many a serious mind is led to imagine would have been forever sufficient to have given it unshaken conviction and comfort about all the realities of our holy religion.

My brethren, that is an infidel notion, not a Christian one. It is an error. We do not say a Christian may not sometimes entertain it, for a Christian may be greatly mistaken. But we do say that we have no occasion to mourn over the darkness of the dispensation in which it hath pleased God to give us birth; we have no occasion to lament that we did not live when our eyes could have witnessed the prodigies wrought in the sight of the infant church. Had we lived then, it would have been no better for the establishing of our faith. The Holy Spirit gives now all the spiritual communications which he imparted then. There is no alteration in the basis or the substance of Christianity. *He which stablisheth us is God.*

With respect to this difficulty, which we sometimes fancy attends Christianity in the present age, and sometimes think of as an excuse for our weak faith and *unestablished* hearts, we desire you to weigh the following three considerations:

1. If we had lived in the age of miracles, a more troublesome difficulty would have attended us. We should have had occasion to fear that we yielded to Christianity by constraint; that the demonstrations of miracles had conquered us; that our fears and our imaginations had been caught by the astonishing prodigies which met our eyes, and that we had been brought to confess Christ more by the overwhelming of our astonishment than by the attachment of our hearts. We should have had reason to fear that we had been drawn to our religion by the compulsion of outward signs, rather than by the inward teachings of the Holy Ghost, induced by love, and ready to follow our Lord from the principles of a new and holy nature.

This would have been a worse difficulty. It is one which belongs to the heart. It has its seat in the very vitals of Christianity. A man's heart, *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, is always his most troublesome evil, and an advantage given to that deceitfulness is an affliction in the worst of all places. It is of more trouble to us all to get along with the uncertainties which concern our affections, than those which concern merely our mind. And if, instead of living here where the convincing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit are poured out, we could go back to the earliest times of Christianity and live amid the miracles of the Holy Ghost, we should be in worse circumstances (in this respect:) we should have reason to fear that all the yielding of our hearts to Christ had come from amazement and astonishment at miracles; that our faith was a constrained faith; that it was not one which *works by love*. We should say to ourselves, We confess Christ, indeed, but how can we

help it? We have been driven to it, perhaps, not drawn to it. We have seen the miracles; we have eaten of the *loaves and fishes;* we have seen *cloven tongues as of fire;* we have seen the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira. Alas! how shall we determine that all our faith is not rather of necessity than of love? of conquered understanding more than of conquered heart? My brethren, we may be *stablished in Christ* without this heart-trouble.

Take a second consideration. The mind would gain nothing, while the heart would lose much, by the change we have supposed. Let us not weave apologies for our weak faith. We have means enough for being *stablished in Christ.*

In this age we have all the advantages from the miracles and such like early circumstances, which we could have had if we had been permitted to behold them. We have more: we have our religion attested to us by more proofs addressed to our minds than ever the apostles had.

As to the miracles themselves, we have them proved to us by the testimony of eye-witnesses in great numbers; witnesses, competent, consistent, never retracting their testimony in jail or on the gibbet—a testimony given at the time, and in the very place, and in the presence of thousands who could have refuted it, if it had been untrue—a testimony never questioned, even by the enemies of Christianity on the spot, (for they could not say Jesus Christ did not cast out devils, but only that he did it by the aid of the *prince of devils,*) and all this testimony given and adhered to by men for no other earthly gain than *the loss of all things.* What gained James and Cephas by their testimony to a risen

Christ? or the five hundred brethren who saw him at once? or the disciples in Galilee, who beheld him cleaving the clouds of heaven, ascending to his God, now our God, and his Father, now our Father? Let their bloody history tell. Are we accustomed to find men bearing testimony to known falsehoods, when they know that the utterance of their testimony whets and points the dart of death at their hearts?

We know of a multitude of miracles. If we had lived in the age of Christ, perhaps we should have seen but few, certainly we should not have witnessed or known of all recorded in our New Testament. The testimony to these prodigies has come down to us through men whose competency and veracity may be trusted (if anybody's can be;) and, what is of peculiar importance to notice, it has come to us through different parties, somewhat hostile to one another, and watching, each, for any error or conception into which the other might fall. The proofs of the existence, action of Jesus Christ, of St. Peter, of St. Paul, are as good as those we have of Philip of Macedon, of Alexander, or of Cæsar. These last could have been as easily coined by falsehood and wickedness, or arisen from blunders, as the first. Indeed, more easily, we could prove, if we had time.

There never was a miracle wrought while Jesus Christ was on earth which constituted a more perfect testimony to our religion than the prophecies which have been fulfilled and are fulfilling since he ascended back again into heaven. If I had been a Jew, and stood by and seen Jesus Christ turn water into wine, my obstinacy or my scepticism could more easily have believed that my eyes had deceived me, that some deception had been practised upon me, than my obstinacy or my scepticism can lead

me to believe there is any deception practised in the *history* of the miracles recorded in the New Testament. We err in no small measure when we suppose that the sight of a miracle would of necessity make a man a believer in Christianity, and its friend. Many of the Jews whose eyes had witnessed miracles, disbelieved. They attributed them to the power of the devil; they thought Christ had made a league with the prince of hell. Equal obstinacy and wickedness might have made us copy their example. We have no reason to lament that we were not born in Palestine, and not allowed to live in the time of Jesus Christ. That would not have *stablished us in him.*

The third consideration must be divided. Not all that it contains can be received by all these hearers. Alas! that it cannot! If they all possessed such hearts of love as they ought to possess, they could deceive it all. But *the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.* And until these graceless auditors will change from their graceless course, and study divine truth on their knees before God; until they will attend to Bibles, and sermons, and arguments, and proofs about the Cross, for the solemn sake of the salvation of their own souls, they never will, they never can apprehend the whole force of that conviction which attaches a sincere Christian to the Cross, and *stablishes him in Christ.* May the infinite Spirit now come down to bring them to this!

But there is one part of this consideration which may perhaps be received by the graceless. It is a small part. They must judge of it, while we take leave at this point of them, and confine ourselves to those whose hearts have experienced the love of Jesus.

And, my brethren, my dear brethren, how is it that God hath *stablished you in Christ?* whence is the calm and settled confidence in the security of your religion, with which you will come to-day to the death-feast of your Saviour? It comes from your hearts' experience. You have been with Jesus. You have opened your hearts to him. You have tried his love. You have laid down your burden and submitted your souls to his Spirit and his blood. At the Cross, where heaven and earth meet, where God and the sinner are friends, your faith has been established. There God has *anointed* you, *sealed* you, given you the *earnest of the Spirit in your hearts*, and you are established in Christ. Ye need not be *soon shaken* in mind, for ye are confirmed by the *inward witness;* and that principle of surety yields in strength to no other, while it surpasses every other in comfort.

The principle is this: Man is gifted with different organs and faculties, by which he judges of truth as his experience is brought into exercise. His eyes see: this is an item of experience. His ears hear: this is another item. He loves, he hates, he covets: these are items of experience. He sins, and conscience accuses him: this is experience. Now I can trust the experience of my mind, my conscience, my heart, with respect to the facts that meet them, as rationally as I can trust the experience of my eyes or my ears. Thus, the Holy Spirit establishes those who do not resist him. He gives them a *witness within themselves.* They have an experience as real, and which they may trust as rationally, as when their eyes see the sun, or their ears hear the thunder. I know I am a sinner. I know I need pardon. I know I am a creature of wants and woes, of fears and weaknesses.

The shuttle is weaving my shroud, and the chisel and hammer may have been already lifted on the stone that shall stand at my head. To such a creature—to me—to such a sinner, to such a perishing sinner, the blessed gospel of my blood-dyed Saviour speaks! It tells me of PARDON, the sweetest word that ever fell upon a sinner's ear! It tells me of holiness by the Holy Ghost, of God reconciled, of peace of mind, and heaven. I go to the Cross, I open my mind to the Holy Spirit. And as I experience what a believer may, I can no more doubt the reality of my experiences, than I can doubt about day and night, about the sun, the thunder, my family, death, or anything else that meets my organs of sense. The things of the gospel meet my nature, my conscience, my heart, my sorrows, sins, and hopes of immortality; and I can no more disbelieve that it is true and good for me, than I can disbelieve that *it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun*, or that the food which sustains my life is a reality! And especially when time is given me, and I have vicissitudes and trials to pass through, and, amid them all,—in joys and sorrows, in sickness and in health, as I hold my friends to my bosom or resign them to the bosom of the grave,—can test the promises of my covenant God, I would not relinquish the confirmation of a believer for any other kind of confirmation. Heart proof is better than eye proof. The demonstration of a pacified conscience and a soothed heart is of more worth to him that has it than if he had stood by and seen *Lazarus come forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes.*

This is the idea of the text; this is Christian experience; this is the method in which you are *established*, my brethren, and find the promises of God and the pro-

visions of God all *yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of the Father;* for ye are *anointed, sealed;* ye have *the earnest of the Spirit in your hearts.*

I know it breaks the order of this sermon, but I wish to pause here. Pardon me! I must pause. I hope there are not many who will understand me, when I name in this connection a particular thing. But some of you will. The thing ought to be named. I hope there are not many of you who have ever been harrassed, dreadfully tormented with sceptical thoughts about the whole reality of revealed and experimental religion. Such thoughts are terrible. When the mind is sensible of sin, of want, of weakness, and is contemplating another world, and death, and God, and is thinking about safety in Christ—then to have the dark wave of doubt roll over it all,—Is God a reality? Christ a reality? pardon and peace and regeneration and heaven—are they realities?—I say, to have this dark wave of doubt roll over all the Bible presentation is one of the most dreadful torments that ever assailed a crushed, distracted heart. The conflict is terrible. I suppose it is a conflict with the prince of hell. The apostle has described it as a *wrestling. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.* Satan is shooting into our souls his fiery darts, kindled into flame by the very fires of hell.

The soul is sensible of its want: it wants what it cannot *see.* It wants some help for its weakness, sin, and fear, and some foothold on another world; some rock amid this ocean of existence, heaving and darkened with tempest. What will become of me? where can I rest? where can I hide me and be safe? The soul, too, is half sensible that the God, the Christ, the pardon

and peace and heaven told of in the Bible, are precisely what it needs if it could believe them. But when just on the point of accepting them, Satan makes his onset: How am I certain that Christ and peace and pardon and a home in heaven are verily realities? The external proofs are clear, but that does not satisfy me. I want more: I want—I know not what. This struggle is terrible. The soul wrestles. Satan wrestles. Truth, reason, demonstration, and all the wants of the soul are on the side of the Bible and Christ; but still the adversary is able to fling a dreadful midnight of doubt over them all.

Now, how is that midnight cleared away? how is that Satan overthrown? We have no hesitation in the answer. The soul comes off conqueror in this conflict by no external demonstrations. It had enough of them all the time. It gains the victory by *acting* upon the demonstrations; by proving God through taking him at his word; by fleeing to Christ, and *feeling* that the everlasting arms are around the troubled spirit. Then the soul's experiences are added to truth's demonstrations; and, by a conscience pacified, by heart satisfied, by a soul in felt communion with God, by spiritual food and spiritual life, doubt is dissipated and the devil baffled. What is a Christian? is he not a child of God? When do you expect a child to be satisfied? *Where*, but on the parental bosom, and under parental smiles? *when*, but when he rushes into the arms open to receive him, and his ears drink in the sound, *This, my son, was dead, and is alive again!*

My brethren, I mean some of you, (ah! blessed be God, I need only mean some,) I advise you never to attempt to baffle the temptations of sceptical thoughts by

mere external demonstrations. Wrestle on that field, and Satan will be too mighty for you. The external demonstrations are enough for you to *act* upon. *Act, then.* Trust to God. Flee to Christ, and live. Lean on God, and love him, and the universe shall sooner sink than the everlasting arms give way underneath you. You will be confirmed, *stablished*, as the text has it, by those internal experiences of faith which live beyond the devil's approach. You will be *anointed*, *sealed*, and have the *witness of the Spirit in your hearts.*

You perceive we have arrived at the

II. Second head of this discourse. I am sorry I mentioned it. We have entered so much already into the blessed sense of the text, that our hearts may be chilled at the idea of examining its figures. But bear with it: it will not take long, and methods of true interpretation will be of importance to us in places less desirable than the communion-table.

In respect to the figurative terms of the text, let me ask you to notice, 1st: That it is God who is said to have *stablished* believers. It means the Holy Spirit. He is the author of security and comfort. He alone it is whom Jesus Christ meant in that passage,—*When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you.* It is the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is the spiritual experience of the soul in religion.

Notice, 2d: There is nothing in the text to indicate that it has any reference to the miraculous powers or operations of the Holy Spirit. Some have thought that *anointing* means miraculous gifts. It is a mistake. The

sealing, the *earnest*, are as much applied to miracles in the text as *anointing* is; and one of these at least is said to be *in our hearts*. The apostle does not speak of himself, merely, and of others who wrought miracles: he says, *stablished us with you*—all of us, as believers. Manifestly he is referring to what is common (in some degree) to all Christians.

Notice, 3d: That the distinctive meanings attached by some expositors to these three words,—*unction*, *seal*, and *earnest*,—have no foundation in this passage or its connection. It is only a fancy. By *unction* they suppose miracles are meant, which went to confirm or *stablish* those who wrought or witnessed them. By *sealing*, they suppose sacraments are meant, which carry the stablishing of the believer a step further. By *earnest*, they suppose comforts are meant, which fill up the measure of a believer's certainty, bringing him to the last kind of evidence which God employs to establish his faith. All this, in my opinion, is making a fanciful use of the text.

Notice, 4th: That the text, or the chapter, contains nothing to countenance the opinion of other expositors, who affirm that, as this *anointing*, *sealing*, and *earnest* are all from the Holy Spirit, therefore they all mean the same thing.

Notice, 5th: That neither here, nor elsewhere in the sacred scriptures, is anything found to establish the opinion of another class of expositors, who maintain that these words refer to three different kinds of operations of the Holy Spirit. The Bible explains three kinds no more than six, or any other number.

Notice, finally: That to say these three words all mean the same thing; that the apostle conveys by three words

no more than by one, is to make the Holy Spirit employ a very unreasonable style.

My brethren, I take the text in its plainest significance. It is a figure. Some make too much of it, others too little. As usual in contentions, truth lies with neither party, but in the middle. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier and the Comforter. He *stablishes* believers *in Christ* by his own operation. These operations have in the text three comparisons in the three words *unction*, *seal*, *earnest*. Not that the Holy Spirit does three different works on the heart, but while his operation is one and the same *in kind*, as he sanctifies believers, their experiences constitute what is called an *unction*, a *seal*, an *earnest*.

Still it is a figure—its meaning, this:

The first word, *unction*, is a metaphor taken from the anointing oil poured in ancient times upon the heads of persons set apart to some official station, as kings and priests.

The second is a metaphor taken from the common custom of fixing seals to important papers; covenants, deeds, for example.

The third is a metaphor taken from the custom of giving, at the time when a bargain or sale is made, a part of what is covenanted to be given, a part of the purchase-money, *e. g.* as a pledge, an *earnest* of the rest. You have this custom. The form of your deeds of real estate recognizes it. Among your ancestors, when a man sold his farm, he took up a handful of the earth in his hand and gave it into the hand of the man who bought it, signifying that he transferred the whole to him; and this handful of earth was the *earnest*, the pledge. This is the significance of the metaphors.

III. The third head of our sermon will apply it to Christian experience as the believer is *stablished in Christ.*

1. He hath *anointed* us. The believer is rationally *established*, because he finds himself *set apart*, in his religion, to important station and destiny. It would be easy to fill a volume on this point. We have time but for a single thought.

Every just and wise view that a man takes of his own thinking spirit convinces him that his Maker designed him for some important ends. His soul is a wonderful subject of contemplation. What is it? what was it made for? His thoughts,—with what lightning rapidity they pass from object to object, and move through all worlds, over time and eternity, in a single instant! His affections,—what wonderful bliss in them when he is happy! what wonderful bitterness, when his heart bleeds over the coffins of his kindred! His conscience, his fears, his hopes, all that belongs to his spiritual being, seems to assure him that purposes of no small moment must have induced his Creator to bring him into existence. Are these purposes answered here? Does man do anything between his swaddling-bands and his shroud which comports with all the designs which his qualities indicate? Was he made for nothing but to sin, to sigh, and to expire? Was his Maker malignant towards him when he put into his heart those "longings after immortality?" Remorse and fear assail the sinner while his "eyeballs are turned towards the mouth of the vale where the last glimmerings of light linger; and, as the invisible hand irresistibly urges the reluctant wretch forward to his opened grave, *must* horror and dismay suspend all his faculties, *must* chill despair creep through his vitals, and brood sad and

Leavy over his heart, and darkness which may be felt oppress and overwhelm the departing spirit?" *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* It is that inheritance ALONE which explains the mysteries of my being, my mind, my remorse, my immortal longings. I am *stablished in Christ*, when, by an unction of the Holy Spirit, I see that important ends are to be answered by my redemption, ends which comport with the qualities of my being, and my eternal destination.

Having an *unction* of the Holy Spirit, the believer realizes that he is called to glorify God. His home is eternity. His inheritance is heaven. His body is the *temple of the Holy Ghost;* and as he, approaches that awful hour of dying, when the strongest powers of nature fail, visions of God burst upon his enraptured sight, the melody of heaven floats along the air, angels wait to minister to the heir of salvation, Jesus, the friend of sinners, comes to *receive him to himself*, and death is *swallowed up in victory.*

All this tends to *stablish* the believer *in Christ;* for this is reasonable, this is worthy of man and worthy of God, and nothing short of it is. And if we cherished this unction more, my brethren, we should be better Christians. The Holy Spirit anoints us to an important destiny. We are *kings and priests unto our God.* We are to glorify the Father; we are the purchase of the blood of the Son; we are the recovering work of the Holy Ghost; we are to vanquish sin, to *bruise Satan under our feet;* we are to *walk with God;* we are to be

spectacles to angels and men how poor sinners like us can be justified, and have peace with God, and *walk with Christ in white* in the streets of the New Jerusalem. Our *anointing* is for this. If we considered it more, we should be more established; we should see that the gospel gives us what our nature wants,—our hopes, and fears, and sorrows, our sins, and sicknesses, and graves; we should experience more of the fellowship of God in our high calling; we should *taste*, and therefore we should *see that the Lord is good.*

2. He hath also *sealed* us. We explained the figure. It does not refer to the sacraments, but to the interior grace of the regenerated creature. The seal leaves an image of itself. Sanctification leaves the image of God upon the soul. *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* God knows his people. They are *sealed* as his. They have the family mark, not merely by external signs in the sacraments, but by a more holy signal,—*they depart from iniquity.*

By this, the experience of true believers *stablishes them in Christ.* They know the truth of Christianity in a manner peculiar to themselves. To-day, as she comes to the communion, one will say to herself, "A little while ago I did not care for Christ. I was a wild, giddy girl. My fancy was vain. My heart was obstinate and hard; and I was moving towards eternity only to leave the follies and sins I loved for the dreadful retributions of God. Oh! my Saviour,

> 'Why was I made to hear thy voice,
> And enter while there's room?
> When thousands make a wretched choice,
> And rather starve than come.

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly *forced* me in,
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.'"

Another will say, "How different I am now from what I was! Once I loved the world; I lived for it, labored for it; it was all my portion and desire. My father counselled me, my mother prayed for me as long as she lived, but I went from her funeral as fond of the world as ever, and with as little abiding impression of death as if my tears had not watered her grave! Such a sinner, proof against so many warnings and entreaties and strivings of the Spirit, I know it was nothing but God that called me off from the world."

Another will say, "Once more, before I die, my God allows me to come to the communion. I have been there many times. It has always been good for me to be there. Such calmness, such a sweet sense of pardon has come over my soul, such a willingness and desire to be Christ's. I can look back on my life, now almost spent, and remember my God has never forsaken me. I have been through trials, very heavy trials. But even when my own heart has sunk within me, my God has never given me up. He has stood by me, and comforted me when nothing but God could have kept me from sinking. Christ is my best friend. I chose him early, and I have followed him long, and I remember his thousand mercies to my soul. I will go and celebrate his love once more, ere my grey hairs go down to the grave."

My brethren, these are what we call the *sealing* of the spirit, to *stablish* believers *in Christ*. The principle is this: they *experience* in their own souls such things as

they know could come only from God. They know that they never should have gotten the victory over the love of the world, sin, temptation; never have stood the furnace of their fiery trials, and come out alive, except the grace published in the gospel had been given to them. That given, they are *stablished* in Christ, because they are *sealed.* Every lineament of holiness is a part of their sealing—some of the image of God. The humble temper, the forgiving disposition, the spiritual-mindedness of believers are from the Holy Spirit, and while their souls experience love, joy, and peace in God, as they trust in Christ, they are *stablished* in him.

3. *Hath given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.* We explained the figure. As it introduces the idea of Christian experience, it means comforts which the Christian sometimes enjoys; it means foretastes of heaven —*an earnest*—a little part of that felicity which we are going to have, if we ever get home to heaven.

These earnests may be rare among Christians. I am afraid they are, except with those who maintain a very close walk with God. But they who do have them are *stablished* by them—are confirmed in the faith by their own experiences, as God gives them *the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts.*

The principle is the same which I stated a little while ago: it regards the nature, qualities, and wants of man.

I reason thus: I know I am a helpless creature, and need something to comfort me amid the trials of life, and some friend to go along with me into that dark valley of death where all earthly friends can do me no good: I want something that can comfort a sinner like me when all the world forsakes me, or I am leaving the world. Creatures are not enough. Creature comforts wither,

and our dearest friends, even if they do not die in our arms, cannot, with all their affection, bestow what my soul needs. The gospel calls me. I fly to Christ. I have found the friend my soul needs. He pardons my sins: he tells me not to fear, for *he will never leave me nor forsake me.* He will cleanse me in his blood; he will shelter me by his power; he has bared his own bosom to the sword to save me, when *he was wounded for my transgressions.*

As I believe all this, I can no more doubt that it is true, that it is adapted to my nature and wants, that it is good for me, than I can doubt the reality and benefit of any other friendship for which my nature is formed, and which I am permitted to experience. Thus God, the Holy Spirit, establishes the believer *in Christ.* He shows us that even *mortality is swallowed up of life, and he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the* EARNEST *of the Spirit.*

These earnests are greatly diversified. They are, however, all foretastes—

"Joys of heaven to earth come down."

But they are as various as the comforts of the Holy Comforter. Aged Christians probably have most of them, when earthly comforts have vanished, and, weaned from the world, they have their *conversation in heaven.* But young Christians may have them. They may be enjoyed by any of us, who, in the fellowship of the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, will live above the world.

It is a foretaste of heaven, an *earnest of the Spirit,* when a Christian retires from the world and learns to delight in contemplating the saint's everlasting rest—his home, his hope, his all.

It is a foretaste of heaven when, amid his trials, the believer exercises unshaken trust in his God. *I know that my Redeemer liveth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold for myself.*

It is a foretaste of heaven when a Christian, cut off from earthly comforting, reposes upon his heavenly Father.

"The Lord 's my shepherd—I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green—he leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

It is a foretaste of heaven when the old communicant, going once more from his Master's Table, refreshed and strengthened, lifts his voice, trembling with age, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

It is an *earnest* of heaven when the young communicant can take the cup from his lips:

"'Tis done! the great transaction 's done!
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to obey the voice divine.

"Now rest, my long divided heart!
Fixed on this blissful centre, rest!
With all things else I freely part;
Jesus is mine, and I am blest!"

It is an *earnest* of heaven when, by the blessed grace of God, a believer is permitted to come to the communion-table with one very dear to him, who never accompanied him thither before. What joy, what

gratitude to God, what delight in this fresh fellowship with the child, the wife, the brother or sister with whom now he expects to hold fellowship in heaven! Hand in hand, he says, we shall walk on the flowery mount, whose base is laved by the river of God. We shall sing together, we shall see Christ together; never, never shall we be separated as long as eternity shall roll.

To-day this house would be an *earnest* of heaven, and more like it than ever earthly house was, if we could meet all our children, and the friends most dear to us, drawn in love to the Table of Christ. Oh! what delight would fill parental hearts! what praise and glory would go up to the God of heaven! with what ecstasies of delight, what transports of joy would each of us say, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

That is an *earnest* of heaven which is sometimes experienced just on its borders. The bed of death is its borders, when a believer lies on it. The calm, strong faith sometimes experienced there; that solid, solemn peace with God; that serene waiting for the last pulse to stop, and Christ to come and take his ransomed child to himself; that *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!* that trembles on the pale lips—these are some of the *earnests of the Spirit* in the heart that will soon cease to beat.

We are coming to that spot. The sentiments fit for the service of to-day are the best preparations for it. We come to take Christ, and therefore *all things.* Over the assembled guests at his Table, his voice utters, *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens*

shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, but my SALVATION *shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.*

He which stablisheth us in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy *victory!* At the communion-table may God *seal* us, and prepare us to speak thus in the coming hour! may he give us *the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.* AMEN.

XIII.

I will not leave you comfortless.

"I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you."—JOHN xiv. 18.

MY BRETHREN, when you have read of the lives and privileges of ancient scripture believers, probably the idea has often occurred to you that there is a mournful difference between their privileges and your own. You live at a great remove from those manifestations that you read of in the scriptures, and you are sometimes tempted to think that it will be vain for you to try to equal the piety of ancient saints, if you cannot have their privileges to aid you. If you could hold converse with Jesus Christ from day to day, like his disciples, if you could witness tongues of fire, if you could stand by and see men raised from the dead, if you could hear the risen Saviour say, *Reach hither thy finger and thrust it into my side*, you imagine that your Christian faith would have a more happy confirming, and especially that your Christian comforts and hopes would be more consolatory, cheering, and constant

There may be some truth and there may be some illusion in this idea. We will not now attempt to discriminate between them. The idea is natural, and not to be altogether blamed. It may arise, not entirely from

a vain curiosity, but from an affectionate heart, and a desire to be drawn nearer to God, and a commendable longing after more comforts and satisfaction of soul.

Such comforts are very desirable for us. To have a sense of God's presence, to possess a comfortable assurance that we are accepted of him, and are on our way to our heavenly inheritance, are sometimes very necessary, both for our fidelity and to keep us from despair.

But we must learn to be satisfied with God's methods of giving such joys. We cannot have the Saviour with us as he was once with the disciples. *They* could not always have him. *Me ye have not always* with you *I go to my Father. Sorrow filled their hearts* when they heard it, and I shall not blame that sorrow which fills yours when you long after more intimate fellowship with God, and think of the privileges which you imagine would make you happier disciples.

The words of the text were uttered in relation to a similar sentiment. It was a privilege to live with Jesus. The disciples were now to lose that privilege. The time was come for Jesus to depart out of the world. The Supper was instituted. His betrayer had gone out on his cruel errand. His foes were embodied. The wood of his Cross was cut, and it only remained that he should have his last conversation and prayer with his disciples, and then go away to the garden of agony, to the hall of judgment, to the closing bitterness of the Cross! *I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.... Jesus Christ* is *the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.* In that priesthood he exercises within the veil, he stands, the same friend he stood at the communion-table in Palestine. *We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.... I will not leave you comfortless.*

For all his disciples to the end of time this promise is recorded, and *the faithful and true witness* will verify it.

I will not trouble you now to hear the explanations and proofs of this promise. It is enough to remark that the comforts intended here are mostly those of faith, love, peace, reconciliation to God, assurance of his favor, and such other sentiments as tend to make believers happy; and that they are bestowed through the operations of the Holy Spirit, as the holy Comforter in the hearts of the children of God, giving them fellowship with Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, their own friend, and *elder brother*. They are the blessed experiences of God's people, when they love God, and hope in his favor, and are comforted as his children.

But it often occurs to us that we find a lacking in these our comforts. Some believers, when they contemplate coming to the Lord's Table, find their hearts destitute in a sad degree of the comforts which they desire, and which they know are to be found in the true experiences of piety. They have faith, some faith, and perhaps they do not doubt it. They have some hope, some humility, some repentance, some disposition and devotion to the service of God. But their comforts are few. There is little sweetness in their hopes, little joy in their faith. They seem to themselves to be outcast, disinherited children. They seem to be away on the mountains round about Jerusalem, looking with longings toward the temple, but not able to come in before the altar, the ark, and the mercy-seat. They scarcely dare come to the Lord's Table. A cloud, a dark cloud, seems to hang over that Table.

In relation to such a state of mind we have chosen this text. And though the gloomy ingenuity of de-

spondency is exceedingly prone to turn such passages against itself by saying, There is a promise of comforts, but I am comfortless, and therefore not a true disciple of Christ; still, let us see if God's children ought not to be and cannot be cheered with the promise, *I will not leave you comfortless.*

The state of mind is this: Those who have some belief that they are born of God are troubled in heart because their comforts in religion are so small and few; their joys, their buoyancy of spirits are so small, and so often interrupted, that they doubt whether they are Christians, and ought to come to the Lord's Table.

In regard to this, I have the following things to say:

1. In Christian comforts there are different degrees. In my opinion, there is more difference among Christians in respect to their comforts than in respect to their holiness, their faith, or their fidelity. Our comforts, our emotions of pleasure are connected with our animal nature more closely than are our virtue and faith. At any rate, there are different amounts of Christian comfort. Different believers have arrived at different stages of divine joy. The same believer, at different periods of his life, will experience very different frames of mind, and in no respect will his experiences wax and wane more than in respect to his conscious enjoyments in religion.

This idea is appropriate to our circumstances and our subject. At communion-seasons we are accustomed to have our thoughts turned to the wonders of redeeming mercy, the love of a dying Saviour, the efficacy of divine grace, and the sentiments which believers experience. We meditate on that *peace which passeth understanding;* that *joy unspeakable and full of glory;* we go

from the Bethlehem-cradle through the garden to the Cross, down to the Sepulchre, and then away over Mount Olivet to the ascension from Bethany. These are captivating themes. Not every degree of animation and joy is able to enter into them to its satisfaction. But it is possible for us to be true Christians, and not at every moment or at every communion be able to be *filled with joy and peace in believing.* It was only Peter, and James, and John who were taken up to the mount of transfiguration. It was only Moses who climbed the heights of Pisgah, and looked over the swellings of Jordan into the Canaan of promise. Those rapturous emotions, excited in the bosom of some favored believer, and appropriate to the objects and duties of our communion-seasons, are not the only evidences of piety. We may have faith and salvation without them. And the trembling believer, who sincerely supposes that his Master calls him to his board, ought not to be haunted with the fear of communicating unworthily because he is conscious of not yet having reached the full exaltation of joy and bliss of which the scriptures speak. Who *has* reached it? Whose heart swells to the measure of redeeming mercy? Whose comfort, Christian felicity, is not rebuked by the truths of our communion-table? the overflowings of the love of God? We ought not to let the imperfection attaching to our joys blast them entirely. We ought to be thankful for the *crumbs* even *that fall from the Master's table.* Not at every moment does the true believer sing his sweetest songs in the house of his pilgrimage. His walk is sometimes through a vale of tears. Not every true Christian is translated like Enoch, or rides, like Elijah, to heaven by a chariot and horses of fire.

2. In this state of mind, we ought to weigh well the aim of those scriptural passages which seem to condemn us. In my opinion those passages were not given to be used as, in our lack of comforts, we are prone to use them. They were not given as tests of religion, so much as promoters of a more tender and affectionate and devoted piety. I have been examining the Bible in regard to this most interesting point, and a multitude of texts convince me of this. *He that believeth shall be saved.* This is a test of religion. If we have not faith, we are not on the way towards heaven. *The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.* This is not a test of religion; it is a prayer—a pastoral and apostolic prayer for joy and peace to the apostle's beloved. *Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* This is not a test of religion. It is a passage of Christian experience, and does not declare that all Christians must always rejoice so. The same remark holds good in relation to other passages.

But when our comforts are few, we are apt to take those texts which give to the believer the highest exaltation in joy, peace, and a heavenly frame of mind, as tests of piety. They were not designed for this: they were rather intended as promoters, motives, encouragements to us to aim after a more blessed nearness to God, and more of the sweet fruits of heavenly-mindedness. Many of them are purely biographical. They tell us how David felt; how Moses, Isaiah, Jacob, Paul, felt; how the Elijahs, the Zaccheuses, the Simons, were lifted on the wings of exulting sentiments of joy, to soar beyond the cloudy atmosphere of doubt and gloom; but they do not tell us that the poor beggar-men who cried along the highway after Jesus—that the trembling

woman in the crowd, who thought by stealth to touch *the hem of his garment*—that the publican, smiting his breast in the temple—were not accepted? No, no! the joys and comforts we read of are not tests of religion. In a low state of comfort they seem to condemn us, because then our mind, our heart, our quickened sensibilities, do not take in all their significance. We think they ought to do so if we are Christians. And because we have not the highest of all *joys*, we are afraid we have no *faith*. We should learn to understand better the aim of such passages. They aim to express all there is in religion; to unfold, as far as language can, the fulness of its blessedness. Hence,

3. When our religious comforts are small, and we sadly call in question our acceptance with God, and our fitness for the Lord's supper, we ought to reflect that there are different kinds of proofs of piety, as there are different exercises in religion. The evidences of experimental religion are very numerous. All our views, all our sensibilities, all our purposes, all our motives, and all these respecting ourselves, respecting our Saviour, our life, death, and eternity, may be examined for the purpose of deciding whether we are *in the faith*, or not. It may be some evidence to us that we are Christians, when our mind is filled with comfort and joy, but we ought not to make too much of it. The misfortune of a comfortless mind is this: it will take nothing but comfort as an evidence of its religion. Its misfortune and its error are one. It will turn away from penitence, from humility, from purposes to follow holiness; with any, with all of these, it will not be satisfied. Lack of personal delight and joy spreads a gloom over everything else. There is something very distressing in all this.

In such a frame of despondency, the individual will look at nothing only as he looks at his own dark heart to see it. Tell him of God, and he will bring up his heart, and hold it between his eye and his Maker. Tell him of Christ, and he will bring up his heart, and hold it between his eye and the Cross. Tell him of the covenant, and he will read its articles only as he looks at them through the glooms of the same sad heart. Everywhere that comfortless heart comes before him, and prevents, and distorts, and darkens his view. If he could forget it he would be more wise and more happy, but he cannot. He thinks he must not. He imagines it would be wickedness in him to be cheered by any promise of God. He can only sit down in sackcloth by the altar, and bewail his state: *O that it was with me as in months that are past, when the candle of the Lord shone on my tabernacle!*

This is a sad condition. He ought to remember that his bewailing may be as strong an evidence of his religion as would be the counterparts he longs for. When Peter went out and wept bitterly; when David cried, *Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation;* when Job bewailed, *O that I knew where I might find him!* these were as real proofs of piety as when the one said, *I will not deny thee*, and the other sung, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;* and the other exclaimed, *I know that my Redeemer liveth.* A comfortless heart should remember that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. On the same tree of life cluster *love, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, temperance.* If leaves hide joy from our view, or dimness of vision does not behold it, let us not refuse to look at the rest. The most infallible proof of our being *partakers of Christ*

is found in our steady aiming, with all our might, to fulfil the conditions of our salvation, to serve God, to follow holiness, to put on Christ. If one is conscious that he is sincerely doing so, and at the same time is longing after Christ—after communion with God, under a sense of the truth, the excellency, the safety of Christianity—and at the same time sincerely and solemnly purposes to adhere to Christ as well as he can, he has three evidences of being in a gracious condition, either one of which is of more weight than the comforts he longs for. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

The comforts of a Christian heart may be some evidence of being in a state of grace, but we should learn to give the proper place and rank to such evidences. They are worth little when they stand alone. They are worth little when some of them do not arise from a consciousness of having surmounted some of the difficulties of our salvation, and from a trust in grace that we shall yet be enabled to surmount the whole.

4. When the Christian's heart is greatly destitute of comfort, of the vivacity and sprightliness of joyous exercises, he often accounts for this on the principle that God would not thus deny what the believer calls *the light of his countenance*, if he had not been very unfaithful, or on the principle that he is not in a state of grace. But often he is in double error here. One item of it is, that he takes nothing but liveliness of affection, vivacity, joy, to be *the light of God's countenance;* whereas the calmness of a sedate submission, patience, the firmness of a purpose to serve God, and things of a

like nature, may as really be the approving smiles of his heavenly Father. The other item is, that he makes an excessive application of a general principle. Although it is true, in general, that God does not withdraw the *light of his countenance* from his people, only as they are unfaithful to him, still, he has not told us that we shall always be in joy if we are always faithful. If we are not unfaithful, he will not be angry with us, but we may think him angry when he is not. Ecstasies are not to be enjoyed always. Peter must go down from the mount of transfiguration; Paul must come back from the third heavens; the disciples must leave the communion-table, and go to Gethsemane; and after the crucifixion they must mourn, *We thought this had been he who should have redeemed Israel.* God may have reasons for denying us comforts, which are not to be found in our lack of fidelity, or in our graceless condition. They may be found in his own sovereignty, or the depths of his unfathomable wisdom. Remember, he does not keep us here on the earth merely to smile upon us. He calls us to serve him, to *endure hardness*, to *run a race*, to *fight a good fight;* and if grief filled the hearts of the disciples when the Saviour left them, we may expect that, for the same cause, it will sometimes fill ours. He thus tries our fidelity, and gives us afterward the greater felicity from our consciousness of having served him when we did not know that he loved us. Let us not abuse a general principle. Let us not miserably conclude we are in a graceless state because we resemble the disciples after their Master had left them. Let us cling to the promise, *I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.* The very fact that our hearts feel their need of what is

promised, is to be numbered among the evidences of a gracious condition. It was the child of Israel that hung up his harp by the waters of Babylon, and wept when he remembered Zion. The silence of his songs, his very tears, were testimonies and tokens that his heart yearned with a child's affection for Jerusalem, his happy home. None but a child could have said, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.*

A comfortless believer should examine whether his affection of mind does not arise from his change of circumstances. Our situation greatly influences our spirits. We cannot avoid it. Grace does not render us insensible. Isaiah could not avoid it when, under the affliction of a barren ministry, he went out from the society of men, and, seated on the lone cliff of the mountain-rock, lifted his eyes from the sackcloth that covered him—*Lord, who hath believed our report?* Jeremiah could not avoid it, when, for the same reason, (an unfruitful ministry,) he wished he had never been born—*Wo is me, my mother! thou hast borne me a man of contention and strife to the whole world;* and then resolved never to preach again—*I will not speak any more in the name of the Lord.* Jesus Christ could not avoid it—*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.*

Believers are not superior to circumstances, and sometimes changes in these strip us of our privileges, and we are obliged to leave our Christian society, and the Christian ministry under which we were converted and comforted, for other society, and another ministry less helpful to us. Of this affliction from change of ministry I should not do justice to you or to myself if I did not say that I feel the painfulness and the humiliation of the idea. Sometimes these changes deprive us of our

retirement and leisure, and fling us into the cares and perplexities of the world. Such things must affect us, and they will have more or less influence on our comforts in religion. Our lack of these comforts may spring from these changes, and ought not then to drive us to despondency. No, no! it may be uncomfortable, but Jacobs must sometimes give up their Josephs to go down into Egypt; but Egypt is God's, and shall yet give her corn to go to the famine of Canaan, and send back Joseph to the grey hairs of his weeping father. Only, abuse not this principle to make it an excuse for your sinning. If you are longing after more comfort in religion, you will have no disposition to do so. But the principle we announce is a truth. Our religious joys are unavoidably diminished by some of the changes that pass over us. Such changes affect *them especially*. *They*, our comforts, are the sweet, and gentle, and tender, and fragile things of our religion. We may be Christians if our changes do affect them. Such changes nip the buds, and blight the tender shoots and blossoms of our Christian ecstasies and joys, but they pass harmless over the rock of our Christian principles and Christian purposes. If these purposes and principles are not shaken by them, we ought to take courage and consolation from the text, *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you. The promises shall yet be verified.*

6. Akin to this is a sixth idea. It belongs to old age. My fathers, my elder brethren, I do not aspire to teach you anything on this point, but I tell you what you very well know is true. Age deadens animation. It chills the currents of joy. All our delights in religion (as I said) are more intimately connected with our physical nature than is our faith, our Christian virtue, or

our fidelity. Age will be very likely to remove some of the zest and liveliness of our delights. And if we have not been converted and established in our faith till years have stiffened our muscles and benumbed our nerves, and rendered us less susceptible of mental animation and joy, we need not be disheartened and sad because we lack the quickness of joy of which the scriptures speak, and which we sometimes behold in younger believers. Our souls may have faith, though our hearts are incapable of the joys and ecstasies of a more youthful existence.

7. The ministry under which we are may be of a kind to keep our hearts destitute of fervid and joyous emotions. In order to guard us against the deceitfulness of sin, and mere formality and heartlessness in religion, our clergymen (as they ought to do) often dwell upon the efficacy of divine grace, and the experiences which it produces in renewed and heavenly affections. This teaching is sometimes misunderstood, and we are led to expect in Christian experience, and especially in conversion, something like the wonderfulness and suddenness of a miracle, an overpowering tide of rapturous and vivid joy in the Saviour. We take such things as the only just proof of religion, and essential to the character of a believer. Hence, when we have them not we fear we are abandoned of God. The evil may be in our teachers more than in our own hearts. They may have failed to make their cautions well understood. And especially they may have failed (the idea is due here, I am painfully certain it is due,)—they may have failed to represent rightly the blessed compassion of Christ to the trembling, and to execute that blessed commission, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.* Ah! yes,

we do fail often: *certain women* were obliged to go alone to the sepulchre to weep, and be comforted by Christ, when the disciples, who might have been expected to lead them there, were fled, and sorrowful, out of Jerusalem.

Finally: our mourning under spiritual desertion may arise from the very tenderness of a filial affection, and a sense of the greatness of the benefit,—to be permitted to enjoy the communion of God. It may be the longing of the child after the counsels and bosom of his Father. It may be *such* misery as none but a child of God *can* feel. It may be such a lack and such a longing of soul after God, as can never be exercised except by the most tender and affectionate piety. Hypocrites are not apt to complain of spiritual desertion. It was the family of Christ whose hearts were filled with sorrow when he was about to leave them. *Such* persons, in *such* sorrow, *he will not leave comfortless; he will come unto them.*

If such is the sorrow of any of your hearts, my brethren, in your afflictions and trials, *he will come unto you; he will not leave you comfortless.*

Are your spirits depressed and sorrowful? So were those of the disciples at the first communion-solemnity that ever was. Jesus Christ uttered the text to comfort *them.* Oh! allow it to comfort you. Have faith in his promise! If there is any place this side of heaven where a poor sinner's soul should be comforted, that place you are now to occupy. You are, as the adopted child of heaven, to take all the blessings which the overflowings of heaven pour down upon your head. You are to use an argument, a plea, which brings all the universe to your feet. As you lift the Cup, you

are to say, *He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for* US, *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!*—and you will drink of it. He will give them. You shall have just as much of the world, and just as little; just as much of pain, affliction, tears, toil, triumph, felicity, and just as little; just as much of *life*, and just as little—as shall be best for your immortal good. Take Christ, and you take everything. Are your souls longing after a sense of his goodness? I am glad of it. *He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with his goodness.* Are you depressed,—your soul fearing it is abandoned of God, because you have few comforts? My dear fellow-sinner, where will you go to find comforts if you cannot find them in Christ and at the communion-table? You are called there to be comforted. Come, needy of it; come, willing to get it; come, expecting it!

> "Let not conscience make you linger,
> Nor of fitness fondly dream;
> All the fitness he requireth,
> Is to feel your need of him."

He will not leave you comfortless. If you had none of this lack and none of these longings after intimate and comforting communion with God, I should hardly bid you welcome to his Table. Be not overwhelmed in sadness! If God had no mercy for you, he would not have called your thoughts from vanity towards salvation; he would not have plucked you out of the whirl of the world; he would not have sent you his Holy Spirit, and spared you to this hour to seek comforting preparation for your death-bed and your heaven. Dry your tears, or pour them into the bosom of *him who*

loved you, and gave himself a ransom for you. He will not leave you comfortless. He *will come to you.* He does come. He stands before you to-day, and, lifting the bread and the wine, he says, *Take, eat, drink ye all of it.* Obey in humble, affectionate faith, and you shall go out from his banqueting-house, sweetly saying, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* The blessed God grant this to all our souls. AMEN.

XIV.

The love of Christ constraineth us.

"The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."—2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

IT is one thing to hear about religion, and it is quite another thing to experience its power. The human mind is capable of quite a tolerable understanding of the great principles of salvation, while the heart itself remains in all its unregenerate darkness. The deficiencies of intellectual apprehension in such a case have been often explained to you, and you understand the points at which the religious knowledge of an unbeliever must always stop; you know the sense in which a man not *born again cannot* SEE *the kingdom of God.*

This idea often becomes very necessary to us when the expressions of the scriptures are descriptions of a sanctified man's experiences. In such experiences, let the unconverted man know that there is always something which he cannot understand, something which lies beyond the reach of the mightiest mind that ever was, and which will be forever hidden from every mind not willing to be taught by the Holy Spirit. And in such experiences let those of us who think we are Christians,

know that there may be much which our weak love and feeble piety must fail of understanding correctly. But in such experiences, let the humblest, poorest, most ignorant believer on earth know assuredly there is nothing which he may not himself reach, nothing from which he is debarred, nothing in whose full light and bliss and peace his piety may not aspire to participate. By grace we may *know all things, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord*, ourselves *changed into the same image from glory to glory.*

The text we have read to you is in the style of experience. It tells how the writer himself felt; unfolds the working of his heart upon the great principles of Christian salvation and Christian duty.

St. Paul was neither a madman nor a fool. He had been called both. And the text constitutes a part of his defence against the dark-minded accusation.

St. Paul was a Christian. He was a minister of the gospel. In both respects he had excellencies; and we are at a loss which most to admire,—his ardor, fidelity, and heroism as a preacher, or the depth of his experiences as a Christian. But we well know which we ought to admire most. It was his piety as a believer which gave birth to all his excellencies as an apostle. And this piety, after all, was what most distinguished him, and made him a mark for the shafts of ridicule and the attacks of persecution. Nothing could abate his ardor or limit his zeal. *Born of God*, he constantly gave evidence of his lineage—he acted as if he were *born of God.* Called into the ministry of reconciliation, with all its arduous work, he moved under the influences of that piety whose experiences taught him what a blessed thing it was to be a Christian, and made him live to *endure all*

things, to persuade other sinners to be *reconciled to God.* He went from city to city, traversed one province after another, became familiar with scourging and stoning, the madness of mobs, jails, fetters of iron. But no sooner out of one difficulty than he was back again at his old business, preaching the gospel, and telling of the love of Christ, and demonstrating to all men, from Cæsar downwards, that malignity could not weave a scourge bloody enough, or build a dungeon dark enough, or invent a death dreadful enough to frighten him from preaching the gospel, or to cool the ardor of his Christian affections.

But, they said he was beside himself; they called him *fool*, and *mad.* And when he comes to refer to those slanders, he refers to his heart to answer them. He seems to care very little what they call him, or do to him, if he can *finish his course*, and succeed in the ministry to *testify the gospel of the grace of God.* He allows men to say bad things of *him*, to have it all in their own way when they attack him. He only refers to his heart, and preaches on. He even adopts the hard names his enemies apply to him. *For whether we be* BESIDE OURSELVES, *it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us;—he died that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.*

You notice how, in this expression, he unfolds his own sentiments in connection with the grand Christian duty that he lays down. That duty is to *live to Christ.* It is the duty of *all* men for whom Christ died. St. Paul felt it himself, would have other men feel it; and the only defence he makes against the insinuation that he

is *mad*, consists in the avowal of such Christian experiences as show that he was fit to be an apostle. *The love of Christ constraineth us; if we are beside ourselves, it is to God.* (Would that he had more imitators among the ministry, in this manner of defending himself. The best of all possible defences is piety and devotement to duty.)

I cannot avoid remarking here this peculiarity in the inspired writers—a peculiarity which I do not remember ever to have heard mentioned. No matter where they are, or what the accusation against them, their pleading mainly consists in laying open the feelings of their own hearts, and avowing as their own the principles, duties, and sentiments of men of God. They pour the truths of Christianity into the ears of Festuses and Agrippas and Felixes; into the ears of mobs at Jerusalem, and philosophers at Athens; and everywhere these truths come out as effusions of the heart, parts of their own experience and piety. You may find a remarkable passage to this effect in the next chapter to the one from which our text is taken: *Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. But, in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. Oh! ye*

Corinthians, our mouth is opened unto you, our heart is enlarged!

What a wonderful blending of apostolic preaching and Christian experience! What a chapter on vital religion, heart, and life! So everywhere. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience. Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ. All things are for your sakes, that abundant grace might redound to the glory of God. The love of Christ constraineth us. Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*

The devotions of to-day are rather those of experience than those of mere doctrine. We are to celebrate the death of Christ. We are not to celebrate it as a mere historical and glorious fact, but as a fact of immense interest to us. Our propriety and our profit will depend quite as much on the temper of our hearts, as on the correctness of our principles. Happy for us if we can sympathize with the apostle in the text, and blend together, like him, the truths of God, the ecstasies of an ardent piety, and a disposition, under the control of both, to discharge the earthly offices of a believer, so happily described by *living unto him who died for us and rose again.*

The expressions of the text deserve more mature consideration than we have time to bestow. However, we cannot pass them over in silence. You may extend in your meditations the hints we shall hastily throw out, as we now pass from the general sentiment that breathes over the text to the particulars of expression.

The love of Christ. We do not know what it means. It may mean his love to us, or it may mean our love to him. Take your choice. It makes no difference which.

It is one of the most wonderful peculiarities of the sacred scriptures that their very ambiguities and obscurities never harm a devoted piety. If any one had asked St. Paul whose love he meant here—ours to Christ, or Christ's to us—I do not believe he would have answered the question, but rather have left the inquirer to suppose either or both.

The love of Christ constraineth us. This *constraining* may mean a solemn and swaying influence by which the apostle and *other* faithful believers (for he speaks of himself only as an example, only in the way of piety, and not apostleship)—it may mean a powerful influence by which believers are led on in the path of godliness. It may mean *the love of Christ* binds us to our course, collects us together, and concentrates all our aims in the same thing, *to live unto Christ.* If the expression is taken in this sense, it is one of those happy descriptions of religion which defy all counterfeiting. It comes from the heart. It is experience. It is a summary of religion. Men thought the apostle was mad—*beside himself.* He replies by a definition of Christianity, *The love of Christ constraineth us.* When you can answer in this method, you need not care what men say about you.

It may mean simply a general union of all believers in the same object: *the love of Christ constraineth us*, binds us together heart to heart, as if all hearts were but the heart of one man. If it is to be taken in this sense, St. Paul has reference probably to those party strifes in the Corinthian church which did so much to dishonor religion, to diminish at once the felicity and the influence of piety, to prevent its growth, and which party strifes the apostle would censure. He did censure them in

another place. There is not a more sure signal of spiritual pride and declined piety, then when men begin to extol ministers, and cannot say a word about religion without having the name of their favorite in their mouth: *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas.* Shame! shame! *Is Christ divided?* If men loved Christ more, and loved pride, noise, and self-exaltation and vanity less, we should not hear so much about men —their names bandied about in ostentation, to the shame of Christ.

But the *love of Christ* here seems to us rather to signify its transporting influence; *the love of Christ* impels us, bears us away. It would be very wonderful indeed if the matters of our religion did not sometimes lead us into practices which mere men of the world and sin consider extravagant. They do consider them so. They have said that we neglect our necessary business to spend important time in prayer. They have said we should beggar our children by donations to the cause of Christ. They have said that we sunk our honor, and made our very souls mean-spirited, when we pocketed an affront or bore an injury rather than quarrel. Says the apostle in another place, *We are fools for Christ's sake.* The minds of believers are sometimes so *constrained*, so taken up with heavenly things, that they forget to eat their bread, like David. Their thoughts are on their souls, on their God, on the souls of other men, or wandering far away to that home, that *house not made with hands.* In such a case they are constrained, transported, abstracted from earthly things. They say, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee.* This, in my opinion, is the meaning of the text. If we are in such

a state of duty and devotedness that the world wonder as if we were *beside ourselves*, it is to God, says the apostle. *The love of Christ constraineth us: he died* that we *should henceforth live unto him.*

Because we thus judge. A believer has some "method in his madness." He judges, reasons, concludes. He employs the logic of the Holy Ghost, takes his premises from God, and draws his conclusions with an eye full fixed on immortality. Would that all men were such maniacs. St. Paul, in this clause, turns from the transport to the logic which awakened it—*we judge.*

This sober judging embraces two things. The first is, *That if one died for all, then were all dead.* St. Paul never forgot the character of an unregenerated and unredeemed condition. When *raised up, and seated in heavenly places in Christ*, he loved to look down on the *hole of the pit whence he was digged.* He remembered the valley of dry bones, where he once lay in his nakedness and exposure. A sinner without Christ is dead in a double sense, and this death drawing after it the threatened dreadfulness of another. *First*, he is dead in law. The law condemns him, and for himself he can offer no ransom. *Second*, he is dead in fact. He has no spiritual life. And from his condition he can work out for himself no deliverance. And from these two facts, he is exposed to that *everlasting destruction* which the scriptures call *the second death.* This was his state when Christ found him, when Christ *died for him.* St. Paul takes this into the account: he takes another thing in his *judging.*

He died for us, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. It is no wonder that the love of Christ

transported him, and bore him on. He sees it taking him from the dead to make him alive unto God. He gathers the impulses of his piety as he blends in his mind the miseries of man and the offices of his Redeemer, till he comes out into the light of his Saviour's resurrection.

These are the clauses of the text. If we combine them all, we shall see that the aim of the apostle is to express the power of those sentiments which the love of Christ ought to produce in the heart, leading Christians to actual religion,—i. e., *to live henceforth not unto* themselves, but unto their Lord and Master. This is religion. This is at once our calling and our blessedness.

Such impressions of the love of Christ ought to constrain us to this service, for two reasons:

I. This was the design of the death of Christ.

II. The death of Christ is peculiarly calculated to effect it. Let us attend to these two ideas to make up this sermon.

I. To bring us to live unto the Lord who died for us, was the *design* of his offices.

If Christ's redeeming work had only needed to influence something out of ourselves—to affect the law—to amaze angels—to astound devils—to influence God—or to spread the majesty of God's moral government over the inhabitants of eternity, it would not have been necessary that he should come into the world, and pass through scenes of ignominy and shame in the eyes of men. He might have done his work in the other world. But the aim of his offices was rather personal than public. This is an important idea. It is a very

blessed idea. I love to think how peculiar was the tenderness of God. *He so loved the world.* Not merely his law, his government, his honor, even; but, poor sinners! This was the leading motive. And *this Christ* has come into the world, and has passed out of it through the jaws of the grave, and *this gospel* is announced to *us*, in order to lead us to live different lives, to crucify us unto self, sin, and the world, and fit us to follow Jesus Christ to heaven. The death of Christ was designed rather to affect man than God. He came *to save that which was lost*, by his life-blood for a ransom, and by *purifying unto himself a peculiar people.* He aimed at sin, not its punishment, (except to bear it,) but its overthrow. Hence it was that he said, *I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven.* He was dashing down the throne of the *Prince of the power of the air.* He was limiting the influence and temptations of the great deceiver. Hence it is, *also*, that we have that remarkable feature in the New Testament history, which surprises and confounds so many people. I confess it has often surprised and confounded me. I did not know what to make of it; and if I know now, it was not speculation, but a sense of sin, that taught me. I allude to the casting out of devils by Jesus Christ. This forms a prominent feature in his biography. The meaning of it is, that by the coming of Christ the power of malignant spirits was restrained—spirits once angels in heaven, and who, if they had remained there, would this morning have been waiting to *rejoice over* any *one sinner* here who would *repent*, but who are now malignantly plotting our ruin. By the coming of Christ, the power of these sinning and fallen spirits was limited. *Satan fell as lightning.* Christ grappled with him in his own do

main. Legions of devils obeyed him and his apostles. And we have this remarkable feature in the New Testament, in my opinion, on purpose to teach us that Christ came to *destroy the works of the devil*, and to save us only by snatching us out of the devil's hands. He would teach us to feel that we need a Saviour who can not only cope with depravity, but who can cope with the devil that tempts us; that our condition as sinners lies so much beyond any recuperative power there can be in the *will of the flesh*, or in the *will of man*, that it needs a power able to do battle with the prince of hell! He would teach us to feel that his sacrifice, his love, his death and resurrection, have all this one grand aim, to deliver us from sin and the snares of the devil, and bring us to live for him and heaven.

And when you come to celebrate his death to-day, your celebration will be a happy one,—I know it will be a happy one,—if you come to have sin mortified, and get animation and strength for this one purpose, to *live unto him who died for you and rose again*, to be fitted for heaven. Who of you will come with such a spirit to-day? Who of you will come here, entering with all his heart into the design of the death of Christ, and joyfully purposing henceforth *to die unto sin and live unto God?* The communicant who will do this may have full hope, full peace; he has a right to them. He enters into the very design of the death of Christ, and he may retire from his Table, exclaiming, *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself a ransom for me.*

My brethren, our calling is a holy calling. Our com-

munion is a holy communion. The benefits our sacrament proposes to us are all proposed in one way, and that is the way of a positive holiness, of living to Christ for something beyond the domain of death and the devil. You do not enter into the full design of his death if you do not find in it something more than mere pardon; nor into the design of your sacrament, if you take it merely as the seal of a bill of indemnity. In the death of Christ you are to find a fountain filled with motives to holiness. In your sacramental act you may indeed find all the comfort a poor sinner's soul needs, when you solemnly take the bread, saying, *The Lord knoweth them that are his;* but you must take that comfort only when you take the other part of the seal, and can lift the Cup, saying, *Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* Bear with me. I must condense all the materials for this head of the discourse into a single remark, though I know not how to leave it here. The remark is, that the death of Christ is barren to us, our feasts of communion barren, and we go from such contemplations and such places of *fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ*, to mourn in darkness, and fall into sins again, and to have doubts and fears trouble us as we look forward to death and the judgment of Almighty God, mainly for this one cause—we do not come as joyful sacrifices to Christ, and give away ourselves to live to him who died and lives again for us. This is our failure. This is the principal reason for barrenness of soul amid the love of Christ and communion-seasons.

We haste to the

II. Second matter we mentioned. The death of Christ is peculiarly *calculated* to make such impressions

on our hearts as to constrain us to live for him, for eternity, and heaven. The very story ought to produce this effect, because

1. It brings to mind our state without him. *Then were all dead.* That state, certainly some of us can never forget! Time, eternity, can never wear out from our memory the traces of those impressions which the Holy Spirit made on our hearts when we were led to see what we were. We were dead in sinfulness, in guilt, in law. We found our sentence written, and our doom deserved! God was against us. We were unholy, and he a pure and perfect God. We struggled to get out of the evil, but truth pursued us. We could do nothing.

> "Buried in sorrows, guilt, and sin,
> At hell's dark door we lay."

And as we remember it well, it would be strange indeed if we could not sing on,

> "But we arise by grace divine,
> To see a heavenly day."

This is the *constraining of the love of Christ.* The recollection of our guilt, our entire helplessness and depravity, blended with the remembrance of the infinite personage whose compassion and death saved us—surely there is something in this of most *constraining* tendency. Some of you will feel it to-day, as you ponder your gracious recovery. You will say, A little while ago I was sunk in the world. I was proud, prayerless, ungodly. I was on the highway to hell. I danced on the brink of the bottomless abyss. Oh! if I had died

then! but, blessed be God, I did not. And, as you lift the Cup of blessing, your heart will exclaim, *He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of the deep waters; he delivered me from my strong enemies, and from them who hated me, for they were too strong for me.*

Rely upon it, the blending together a sense of our depravity and desert of divine anger on the one hand, and a sense of divine deliverance on the other, is a thing vital to our religion. You will always find those persons who are deniers of the Deity of Christ, to be deniers of the entire depravity and helplessness of man; and hence you will always find them failing in the impressions which *the love of Christ* ought to make upon hearts. And hence you will always find them failing in the experiences of a spiritual existence. They will live unto taste, unto poetry, unto outward human morals, unto reason, philosophy as they call it, but you will not find them living *unto Christ, constrained* by the love manifested in his death to redeem them from perdition. This forms no part of their theology, no part of their experience. But, let it be yours. Ever remember that you were *dead*, and ever feel that you are indebted for deliverance to a God who would not give you up—to the love and death of his eternal Son.

2. The love and death of Christ are calculated to make such an impression upon us, because these are the things which throw a new lustre over the divine character. Christ's death is a demonstration to us. It demonstrates more than all the universe besides. Nothing else on earth, nothing in heaven, could make such a disclosure of God's character. It demonstrates to us, that when God speaks to us he speaks in love; when he

calls us to *live unto Christ*, he calls us in love. If God Almighty can do anything to demonstrate to fallen sinners the benevolence of his character, he has done it already—our sacrament celebrates it.

We have often troubled ourselves with speculation on the question, What is the essence of sin? A vain speculation, mainly, we admit; perhaps a rash one. When God tells us that *sin is the transgression of the law*, and tells us also what law is, we ought probably to be satisfied. But after all, it seems to us that sin maintains its influence in the soul of man mostly by two devices, deceptions, both of which are assailed in the text. The one of them is a suspicion of God's good-will. Satan tempted Eve by infusing this suspicion into her mind. He told her that God knew that she would be a gainer by eating the forbidden fruit. He made her suspicious that God was no true friend to her. Unbelieving sinners have something of the same impression. They have unbelief, and what is that but suspicion of God? what is that but a suspicious refusing to trust God's promises and God's Son? Now, in the gift and death of Christ God is aiming to overthrow this suspicion. He attacks unbelief with demonstrations of wonder, divinity, and blood. He proves to us that he is no *hard master*—that he has no unfriendly designs; and he scatters the demonstrations from the manger of Bethlehem, along the track of the flight into Egypt, up to the hill of Nazareth, around the lakes and mountains of Judea, into the halls of Caiaphas and Pilate, among the flowers of Gethsemane, on the rocks of Calvary, and from the tomb of Arimathea to the top of Mount Olivet. And then it blazes along the ascension-track, soon to blaze there again when the ascended Saviour shall return *in*

like manner as human eyes saw him cleave the clouds, and soar to *his God and our God, his Father and our Father.* If all this does not demonstrate God's good-will to sinners, what could demonstrate it? If this is not enough, then God cannot demonstrate it—he has not another Son. And he tells us this is his glory. He has no interests which are not ours. His glory is in saving, not damning sinners. His delight is in the outpourings of that love and that grace which gather you to-day at the communion-table.

Ought not this to *constrain* you? Ought it not to transport you out of yourselves to *live unto him who died for you and rose again?* Could anything else so powerfully assail your unbelief? or cause you to say, like our apostle, *I die daily?* Your salvation is very dear to God. He delights and glories in saving *you*, poor worms of the dust! Oh! the gems in the diadem of the *King of kings* are the souls of redeemed sinners! Hence,

3. The death of Christ is peculiarly calculated to make impressions on us, because it calls us to *live unto him* for our own benefit, as well as his glory. It blends our benefits and his glory together, and thus attacks the dark selfishness of our sin. This selfishness is the other of the two devices by which sin maintains its influence. It deceives, makes us believe that our felicity is to be secured by our *living unto ourselves.* This is what the text means when it maintains that the LOVE *of Christ* calls us to *live unto* him. It would be well for us if we would heed the text more, and the suggestions of selfishness less. To die unto self is one of the believer's most amazing privileges. It is what the love of Christ asks of us, and he loves us far better than we love our-

selves. I repeat it: the love of Christ asks us to live no more *unto ourselves.* It proposes something better—to *live to him.* Our salvation comes in such a method as to hedge up the way of our selfishness. Love, mercy, grace, compassion, ask us to live to Christ. Oh! if the fallen angels, the devils in hell, could have such an offer as unconverted sinners have here, how they would exult, and rush to improve it! But ye, sinful and selfish and blinded men, neglect it! Your unbelief, and blind, deceived selfishness, shut out from your hearts the love of Christ! I tell you, your unbelief does God an injustice; it is a dark slander on the character of his mercy! I tell you too, ye are your own worst enemies! Ye know not what ye are doing! Your selfishness, which refuses to live unto him who *died for all,* is a most lying and pernicious influence. Give up your unbelief! Crucify self, and live unto Christ, and you shall be saved. But,

4. Finally, my brethren, the death of Christ ought to have this constraining influence on your living, because it speaks to your *gratitude.* This is the last thing. You may combine here, if you will, everything else. In every particular in which we glorify God and live unto Christ, we benefit ourselves. We do it in all moral duties, in all spiritual graces, in all self-denial, in all heavenly hopes. If you have much piety, you will be thankful for the call to *live unto him who died* for you. You will feel it a privilege. You will be willing to become another Abraham, and go out on the promise from home and country, *not knowing* whither you are going. You will be ready to become another Moses, *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* You will feel, like St. Paul, *constrained,* transported by the love of

Christ; and you will go from the communion-table, joyfully, gratefully resolved to live no more for self and earth, but for Christ and heaven, to *him who loved you and gave himself a ransom for you.*

That love, that ransom, come before you to-day in significant emblems. You memorialize the dying of Christ. His death was the procuring cause of your mercies. He died in misery to redeem you from everlasting death, from wrath, from hell; and now he comes to ask you to live unto him, and have everlasting life, everlasting glory. If you ought to have hearts overflowing with gratitude and love anywhere on this side of the new Jerusalem, you ought to have them at the communion-table.

Our sacrament tells you that Christ loved you most tenderly. He saw you under the gathering curse. He took your place. The blow ready for your head fell on his; and can it be possible that you are not ready to lift the Cup, and say from the bottom of your heart, *I love him who first loved me?*

"From the highest throne of glory
To the Cross of deepest woe,
All to ransom guilty captives—
Flow, my praise, forever flow!"

Our sacrament tells you that once you were a lost sinner—dead—bleached by the winds of heaven in the valley of dry bones. You will remember it. You will look with adoring wonder as you recall your hardness, your blindness, your unbelief.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed his precious blood."

Our sacrament tells you that you are called to die unto sin. It shows you that sin is such an evil that it could be healed by nothing but the amazing life and death of the Son of God. You will remember your calling. And when you call to mind how weak and imperfect you are, how slowly and imperfectly you have walked in the way to heaven, you will exclaim again,

"Oh! to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering soul to thee!"

Our sacrament tells you that you are called to live in *newness of life*. And can you refuse any obedience to a Saviour whose blood became the signal of his kindness, who has led you on thus far, who has stood by and cheered you in trials and fears, and who is coming to meet you again, and says to your distresses now, *Fear not, thou worm Jacob! when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt.*

Our sacrament is a death-feast, instituted as a memorial of love just as Jesus Christ was about to die and return to heaven. And can you refuse heart or life to him who has promised to *come again* and transport you to the bosom of God? We trust not. Cords of love will be woven round your hearts. Heaven will be opened to-day. The Spirit of God will descend upon you. Rich effusions of divine love will be *shed abroad in your hearts*. You may know it by this token, when your spirit whispers to *his God and your God, his Father and your Father, The love of Christ constraineth me... because he lives, I shall live also.* God grant it! AMEN.

XV.

Christ ought to have Suffered.

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"—LUKE xxiv. 25, 26.

THERE was something very affecting in that interval of time between the death of Jesus Christ and his ascension into heaven. The disciples felt it; the whole church felt it. The mind of the church was abashed, the disciples were scattered abroad, and, as they began to gather together again as crushed hearts will do in the depths of a common affliction, they scarcely knew of a single word of comfort to breathe over the sorrows that filled their hearts. Their Master was dead. They had seen him in whom they trusted seized as a common culprit. Confounded and abashed, they had forsaken him and fled. He had been dragged from court to court, and when malignity had wrung the unwilling sentence from the lips that uttered his doom, and the remorseless rabble were assembled to gratify their vengeance by witnessing it, dark and bloody tragedy as it was, *all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.* He

had died. He had *finished the work* which *the Father had given him to do.* He had passed through all the stages of his humiliation, and was no longer that *man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.* He had brought in his *everlasting righteousness*, had *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, pouring out his blood as a ransom for the souls of guilty men. Through the gates of death he had gone to the grave, and stayed there long enough to demonstrate the reality of his dying. He had risen, a king and conqueror, and come back from the dominions of death, to which he had gone as a captive and a culprit; and he was now about to ascend in triumph, openly, amid the shouts of angels, to appear in *the presence of God for us.* What an interesting moment!

The disciples knew not all that was done, the church was dissolved in tears, or stupefied in the mute astonishment of grief! What a tender and terrible crisis! Seven miles out of Jerusalem are two of his heart-fallen followers, communing together in their sadness. What can they say? what can they hope? Ah! heaven has mercy for us often when our sad hearts give it no credit. To a stranger who joins them, those two disciples explain the cause of their sadness. *Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, the chief priests and our rulers have delivered to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; besides, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, certain women who were early at his sepulchre made us astonished; they found not his body*, but *came, saying they had seen a vision of angels which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and*

found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not.

That stranger was Jesus Christ, to whom they were telling their sorrows, and who now utters to them the words of the text, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* He explains to them the scriptures to prove this, accompanies them to the village to tarry for the night, blesses and *breaks bread* for them, is known, and *vanishes out of their sight.* Instantly they set out for Jerusalem, find the other disciples gathered together, saying, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.* The light dawneth. The church gathers up her strength, and dries the tears of her sadness. The scriptures are verified. Jesus Christ HAS *redeemed Israel,* and will honor all the trust that hearts have ever reposed in him. He *has* suffered. He *ought* to have suffered. On that vital fact rested all the revealed salvation. It is done. The Son of God has *finished the work* he came from heaven to do. It was a sufficient sacrifice. Death has owned it, the grave has owned it,—when they could not retain their victim; and devils shall own it; the kingdom of wickedness and error begins to tremble whenever the proclamation of atoning mercy is flung out upon a world of sinners; and the great Captain of salvation, standing by his opened tomb, alive again, affirms to the trembling sinner that he has *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* Thenceforth the gates of heaven are unbarred to sinners, and even now floods of living waters are flowing down to refresh and cheer the heritage of God.

To-day you expect, my brethren, to celebrate this death. You are to engage in that solemnity which me

morializes the very essence of the way of your salvation. To prepare your souls for that solemn service, you need nothing so much as just sentiments respecting the Redeemer's death, and due feelings of faith and reliance upon it. These two things are indispensable. In order to aid you I have chosen this text. Aim to fix all its significance in your mind, and feel it in your heart. I declare to you, if I know any thing of a Christian's difficulties, there is none which he ever meets with of so arduous a nature, as to be properly affected with the death of the Son of God. Just where the very essence of our salvation lies, it seems to me that the worst evils of our hearts come into operation. Unbelief is the damning sin of the world, we know; and it seems to me that the worst fault of Christians is the remains of that same sin, which keeps them from such sentiments regarding Christ, and such an embrace of Christ as the gospel calls them to exercise. Amid the remaining influences of worldliness too much indulged, amid the glooms of doubt and a sad distrust of God, amid forgetfulness of the scriptures, and above all, (I know what I am saying, I have weighed it well,) amid a slowness of heart to come, in all our weakness and wickedness and want, to Jesus Christ, as if we were welcome to all his benefits, bad and base and grovelling as we have been,—these very seasons of refreshing become barren to us, and we are not filled with the joys which God offers to forgiven sinners. The disciples, after the crucifixion, are not alone. Even now, we are *fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.* But let us try *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*

Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour of sinners. His

sufferings and death formed the great atonement for sin, by which, and by which only, sinners can be saved. This is our theme. This is the general sense of the text. We proceed to the demonstration.

I. In order to prepare the way for the more scriptural parts of what we intend to say, and in order, if possible, to gain the attention of those unsanctified minds which never yet have felt the influences due to the sacrifice of Christ, we will present, aside from the scriptures, some presumptive suggestions in favor of the doctrine of the satisfaction rendered by the death of Christ for the guilt of sinners.

1. Such a satisfaction by suffering is not unreasonable. We are not going to submit the decisions of God to the limited reason of humanity. We think we have discovered the firmest foothold on which reason can ever stand. She stands on a rock when she simply believes what God says. The best, the strongest of all possible reasons that I can have for the perfect conviction of my mind is, because God has affirmed the thing. That affirmation is an end of argument, of all proof, of all demonstration. God *cannot lie.* The impossibility resides in his very nature, in his character and existence as God. If he could lie, he would not be God. On the same principle, he cannot be unreasonable, cannot do or require what is unreasonable. To do so would be contrary to his Deity, and prove him no Deity at all. And if, in the sufferings of Christ as an atonement for sin, any one could prove anything unreasonable, we should at once be compelled to abandon the doctrine, even if the abandonment should spread the pall of death eternal over the whole family of man. But it is not unreasonable. There is much in it, indeed, above reason, be-

yond it, but nothing contrary to it. This is the first ground for presuming the doctrine may be true.

2. The second is, that the doctrine is reasonable—not merely not opposed to reason, but in entire accordance with it, so far as reason can understand anything of the significance. It is not a *discovery* of reason. She never could have dreamed it. But, revealed to her, affirmed of God, and the affirmation accompanied with explanation enough to show that this doctrine of atonement is truly sublime, majestic, godlike, reason receives all its mysteries just on the principle that she receives all the other mysteries that she knows belong to the Deity; such as his eternal self-existence, his omniscience, and the righteousness which belongs to his dark and wonderful providence. The suffering of Christ was on account of the sins of men. Sin is the transgression of law. Law is the will of Deity; and its violation, while it is a dishonor to, and an outrage upon the government of God the most high, is itself a disorder, and mars the peace and tends to the still further miseries of the deathless spirit in man. The sinner being in this condition—the penalty of a deep damnation hanging over him, unable to deliver himself, and precious as his capacities for eternal weal and woe have made him—is there not something positively reasonable that God should not at once and willingly abandon him to be an eternal victim of misery and despair? In such a case, is it not reasonable to look around before taking a final plunge into hell, and inquire if there is not mercy in God, and some ground of hope for the guilty? And when the gospel tells us that the eternal Son of God has come in our nature *to seek and to save that which was lost; has magnified the law, and made*

it honorable, standing firm on the very spot where man fell; has been *wounded for our transgressions*, *bruised for our iniquities*, receiving the very strokes which armed the hand of vengeance against us; has brought in an *everlasting righteousness*, needed in heaven's high chancery, not for himself, for he *knew no sin*, and deserved no suffering, but needed to cancel the sinner's guilt, and acquit him at the bar of trial—is there not something in this which seems reasonable? something like God to do? something which reason might at least have *sighed* after? if, indeed, she could not hope ever to hear of. I admit that despair, deep, dark, unsoothed, eternal, would be the most reasonable thing in man, if he knew at all the evil of sin, and the Son of God had not taught him of forgiveness. But I maintain that when the gospel has told him of the sufferings of Christ for him, hope, divine hope within him, becomes as reasonable as despair would be without it. The majesty and the mystery of the deliverance—ah! yes, the very mercy of the deliverance—accord with the majesty and mystery and mercy of God, as far as our limited intellect can compass such things.

And if we pursue the idea onward from the deliverance itself to its bloody method, our presumptive suggestion will not be diminished. Sin was an infinite evil; it woke the anger of an infinite God, and deserved *the fire that is never quenched.* The Saviour was an infinite personage, and *in* that nature which had sinned, as *man*, clothed in humanity, his Deity enabled him to bear the wrath of God for us. Just so throughout the whole method. Sin was against Law. It was reasonable that Christ should honor the Law when he would save the sinner. Sin forfeited the love of God. It was

reasonable that recovery should exhibit love, that God should love his Son for that benevolence which led him a willing victim to death, and, on his account, should restore his love to those who had forfeited it. Reason would expect the transactions of recovery to have close reference to the evils of ruin. Both the fact and the method of atonement afford ground for presuming that the doctrine may be true. They pave the way for its instant and reasonable reception.

3. A third consideration is found in the human conscience. I do not forget that in fallen man this is a faculty that has felt the shock of the fall, and is not therefore to be trusted in the way of proof. But I do not summon it as a witness. I only appeal to it as a part of human nature, furnishing some presumption that Christ *ought to suffer*. And what does conscience suggest? In all true convictions of sin, conscience not only robs us of self-approval, but invariably alarms our fears. She makes us tremble at the idea of suffering under the just anger of God. Hence, what are her suggestions? Invariably some suffering, some sacrifice to appease the vengeance that is feared. Conscience, by her own intuition, by her own nature and spontaneous promptings, never resorts to *power* merely, for the purpose of gaining peace, or to *wisdom* merely, or even to naked clemency merely. She cannot rest there. She wants to see the *ground* of the clemency, and always looks for it in some suffering, some sacrifice. It would be a very difficult thing to pacify an awakened sinner's conscience if he were to be left with the idea that he had done an injury to moral government which could never be repaired, and given an insult to the moral Governor which could never be wiped away. Tell him of power to pardon, and he

would tremble. Tell him of wisdom, and he would tremble still. Tell him of goodness to forgive him, and he will rather long for it than believe it—he wants to see the *ground* of it. Tell him of sufficient sacrifice, and he will hope—he has the ground of it then; he finds it in the sufferings, the satisfaction which stands between him and the justice at which he trembles. This is the third ground for presuming the doctrine may be true; the third item of preparation in man for receiving it; the third suggestion, apart from the scriptures, that Christ *ought to suffer.*

4. The fourth is found in the religious history of man. This history has one striking feature, a feature which demonstrates the truth of what we have just affirmed about the demands of conscience. It is this, that among all nations, religion has always embraced the idea of sacrifices, of some offering, some victim, some suffering—as an expiation for sin. Consult history, bring up the religion of the most savage tribes, and of the most refined of polished nations. Venture back into antiquity as far as history can lead you, and come back along the march of centuries down to the present period. Examine the different kinds of religion, the purest and the most dark and unreasonable. Everywhere one fact will stare you in the face. Turn which way you will, you meet it. You may find it among the wild men of the woods at the base of your own Rocky Mountains. You may find it in by-gone ages, on the plains of idolatrous Chaldea. You may find it in ancient Egypt, in Athens, in Jerusalem. This fact is, that mankind have sought the favor of God by sacrifices. Whatever varieties or contrarieties there may be in their religion, herein there seems to be an uniform agreement. They sought to propitiate the

Deity by sacrifices. Perhaps this idea arose from neither conscience nor reason. It would be difficult to show how it could. Reason could never demonstrate nor conscience furnish any assurance that God could be pacified towards the sinner by the sinner's offering to God in sacrifice what belonged to God already. Probably this custom originated in the ancient revelation of God, and has been handed down by tradition, preserved to some extent amid all the darkness and superstition of idolatry and barbarism. But no matter how or whence. The fact is so. And it shows that mankind have expected a pardon of sin and the favor of God, by suffering, by sacrifices. Conscience has sought for peace in that way. Hence the thousand altars and thousand costly temples of heathenism. Hence that *cutting of the flesh with stones*, and that dreadful offering of the *fruit of the body for the sin of the soul.* Such is the one great fact which lives and lingers everywhere in the religious history of man. The few brutal Atheists in the world, and the few trembling souls who try hard to be Deists, are not enough, and not of dignity enough, to be named as an exception. Now this fact is not mentioned as proof of the doctrine of atonement, but it is mentioned as a suggestion that it may be true; and as a proof that the reason, conscience, and the history of man have no just ground to complain of our Christianity when it teaches that Christ *ought to suffer* as a satisfaction to divine justice for the offence of sinners.

5. There is a fifth and final presumption. In order to understand it, unite in your minds three ideas. Let the first be the majesty of God; the second, the offence of sin; the third, the infinity of Christ's sacrifice. These three ideas all accord. There is no jarring among them.

We see in an instant that they can all enter into the same system. They are all alike in one grand peculiarity, *i. e.*, they are all unlimited in magnitude. There is no majesty like God's majesty; no offence greater than sin's offence; no sacrifice like that of him who was slain, the august victim of redeeming power and love. These three ideas all enter into the scripture doctrine of atonement. That atonement is represented as honoring the infinite though violated majesty of God; as wiping out the deepest of all stains, and as rendered by him who was the *ancient of days, travelling in the greatness of his strength, coming up with dyed garments from Bozrah.* Change any one of these ideas, and you alter the system. Blot out any one, and you ruin it. If the idea of sacrifice can come in at all, while God retains the magnitude of his majesty, and while sin is *exceeding sinful*, it must come in as an infinite sacrifice. There must be a proportion between the greatness of God and the evil of sin which offends, on the one hand, and the sacrifice which atones for sin, on the other. Mankind without the gospel have been perpetually hunting after this proportion. They have reared the most costly temples, sacrificed the most precious victims, endured the most painful sufferings, ever aiming to reach the greatness of God and the extent of sin's evil. The antiquary can tell you, as he moves among the ruins of ancient cities in the old world and in the new, how large a portion of those relics which have defied the crumblings of time were indebted to religious intents for their costliness and strength and durability. And because, simply because mankind without the gospel never have been able to find this proportion, conscience has not been pacified by the altars of heathenism, and

fear, darkness, and despair have hung around the death-bed, and gathered over the dreadful eternity of the dying heathen. It is the infinity of Christ's sacrifice which answers the longed-for preparation. *Christ ought to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory.*

We dismiss this first article. These five arguments are enough. They show that the doctrine of a divine atonement through the sufferings of Christ, when presented to the judgment of our mind, advances nothing which we have any reason to reject. If we find such a doctrine advanced in the Bible, we have already five grounds for presuming its truths—five urgencies to conduct us to the Cross. Then,

II. We do find it in the Bible. I have been trying to imagine or conceive of the manner in which the risen Saviour preached this fact to those two sad-hearted disciples. He did preach it. *Christ ought to have suffered* was his theme; and *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them . . . the things concerning himself.* We dare not attempt to fill up his sermon. We dare not imagine sentences which fell from his resurrection lips. But let us humbly follow his example. He appealed to all the scriptures. On this point we cannot quote. Time compels us to classify. And to prove that *Christ ought to have suffered*, we name seven kinds of texts, or seven sorts of scripture ideas, which establish his atonement for sinners by his death.

1. The first idea is that the sacrifices of the Law were but types and shadows of things, and the suffering of Christ is the substance of the things typified. The value or efficacy of those sacrifices arose entirely from their reference to Christ. Aside from this reference, we should have five difficulties respecting them.

(1.) They would appear to us unmeaning and useless.

(2.) They would appear to us a culpable waste of valuable property, and culpable destruction of the lives of the slain victims.

(3.) They would appear to us a cruel and burdensome exaction, an oppressive tribute. Hence,

(4.) We could not account for their appointment, or their acceptance by a wise and merciful God.

(5.) We could not account for their authoritative disuse, especially for their disuse on account of that reason laid down in the New Testament—because Christ himself has suffered.

But they *were* types. What did the Jews expect to attain by these sacrifices? Evidently they expected the forgiveness of sin. God told them to expect it. He says of the offered victim, *he did bear upon him all their iniquities.* Since, therefore, these sacrifices were an expiation only in type and figure, and since Jesus Christ in his death is the substance, the reality of the thing typified, the conclusion is unavoidable that his suffering is the real expiation for sins, and, that according to the typical economy, *Christ ought to have suffered.*

Consider, now, what a large portion of the Old Testament comes under this idea. Almost chapter after chapter, book after book, prophet after prophet. To reject the atonement is to reject the Old Testament by wholesale. But,

2. The second idea in this classifying of the scriptures is the mode of all the divine promises. The very first one in the Bible is an example. It embraces the humanity and the suffering of Jesus. So of all the rest. There is not a promise of pardon and deliverance from sin recorded in the Bible, in connexion with the

mode of deliverance, except that mode is the action, and, what is very remarkable, commonly the suffering of Christ. It is this—it is mercy's voice, *Spare, for I have found a ransom;* it is, *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: a body hast thou prepared me. Lo, I come to do thy will.* All the comforts which the Bible speaks to sinners, it connects with him set forth to be a *propitiation through faith in his blood.*

3. The third idea is, that Christ is repeatedly declared to have *died for us. Christ died for us, according to the scriptures,* in which expression the fact is not only affirmed, but spoken of as being the very thing which the scriptures would lead us to believe—*Christ hath suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.* A large portion of the Epistles comes under this idea.

4. The fourth idea is, that our salvation is mentioned constantly as the *result* of Christ's death, of that death alone. It is not mentioned as the result of his example, as if his death only put the martyr's seal to the truth of his doctrine, so that we should believe in it. It is not mentioned as the result of his incarnation, his teaching, his miracles, his resurrection, his ascension. None of these things appeased the anger of God. No! Christ *died* that we might live. The other parts of his ministry were only subordinate, and necessary to this and to our acceptance of it. His incarnation was so. *It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren*—for what? —*that he* MIGHT *be a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the* SINS *of his people.* And he *hath reconciled us to God by his death.* Other things in Christ's ministry confirmed his doctrine as much as his death—perhaps more. But never—no, never—is our salvation attributed to them, as it is to his death.

5. The fifth idea is that the scriptures represent Jesus Christ as suffering *punishment* which was due to sinners. *He bore our sins in his own body. He was made a curse for us. He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.*

6. The sixth idea is the consternation and agony of the Saviour in prospect of death, and in enduring it. You are familiar with the passages. You recollect the *trouble* of his *soul.* You recollect the prayer, *Father, save me from this hour.* You recollect the repetition of it, *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.* You remember the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the dreadful *forsaking* of the *Father*, as he hung in agony and blood, surrounded by taunting and jeers. How would you have expected Jesus Christ to die? On the principle that his death was only an ordinary death of violence and cruelty, you must have expected that he would die with joy, with exultation, with triumph. No dying being had ever such reason to die so. He died in spotless innocence, with entire submission to the Father's will. He died when he had finished his work. He died full of love to God and man, forgiving and praying for his enemies. He died in full assurance of *the joy that was set before him.* He was going home to the bosom of his Father, amid the acclamations of angels, to enter upon the *fulness of joy.* With less—a thousand-fold less—of these happy assurances, even sinful men have died in joy, in exultation, in triumph. Why then this agony and trembling in the death of Christ? The only answer is, He was suffering for sins not his own. He stood at the tribunal of an awful justice. Death for him was robbed of none of its terrors.

7. The last idea is, the final triumph of heaven

Saints are going to triumph there. They will drop all their sorrows as they drop the flesh. They will *enter into the joy of their Lord.* But in the scriptures heaven is represented as a purchased possession. The price paid for it was the blood of the Redeemer. Saints will not forget it. In their songs of celestial delight they will remember it. *Thou wast* SLAIN, *and hast redeemed us to God by thy* BLOOD. . . . *They see his face, and his* NAME *shall be in their foreheads.*

We close. These are the seven kinds of ideas which we have found in the scriptures to establish our doctrine. Any one of these classes of texts would be sufficient. But when we have all, and perceive how large a portion of the whole Bible they form, we are compelled to affirm that, if the scriptures prove any thing, they prove the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ to atone for the transgressions of sinners. I declare to you, my brethren, that if you remove the doctrine of this atonement from the Bible, I know not what to make of it. To me, it becomes worthless. Without this it is utterly unintelligible, contradictory, absurd. They are *fools, and slow of heart,* who deny that Christ *ought to have suffered such things, and to enter into his glory. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he* SUFFERED; and being made perfect he became the *Author of eternal salvation. We see Jesus . . . for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor. . . . For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through* SUFFERINGS.

But what are we going to behold? Be astonished, O heavens! To-day, sinners in this place will turn their

back on this ordinance which memorializes this death and atonement of the Son of God. These *five* facts which, aside from revelation, are five powerful urgencies to receive this revealed Christ for their own; and these *seven* great leading ideas, which we find on analyzing the Bible declarations about Christ's death, and which make a great portion of the scriptures,—these, all these have hitherto been in vain! My unconverted hearers, you could do nothing more unreasonable than you are doing. You reject Christ. You reject the offering which nature tells you that you need, and the offering which the Bible tells you Christ has made. This is no ordinary sin. As you turn your back on the Lord's Table, remember it; remember the terrors which gather around that text, *Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.*

But the memorial will be honored. Faith and love and hope and trust will here honor it. Hearts will circle themselves around it. One communicant will say, The law indeed condemns me, but Christ *magnified the law.* Another will say, I am infinitely unworthy, but Christ is infinitely worthy. Another,—I am going to the dreadful tribunal of God, but Jesus has been there before me; his bloody offering has silenced its thunders, and "turned the wrath to grace." All will unite in the sentiment, *We love him because he first loved us.*

Some of you have never before been at this ordinance. You will approach it with mingled trembling and love. Your thoughts will turn back upon your past life, and turn in upon your strange heart; and shame and confusion of face would cover you, and sin fill you with dis-

may, and drive you back from Christ's Table, if faith and love did not prevail over fear. But you will not go back; you cannot; *the love of Christ constraineth you.*

My children—my dear children—I cannot tell you how precious to me is this hour. I have watched over you; I have loved you fondly. I have aimed to aid you in that intimacy of communion, when you unbosomed to me your sorrows and your fears. Allow me to say it: ye are my jewels, my hope, my crown of rejoicing. I bless God for your conversion to Christ. Happy this hour when I welcome you into his banqueting house. Come in the fulness of faith and love. See that you renounce all sin in humble repentance. Recollect, you are called unto holiness. You are to serve the world no more. You must be *vessels of honor, fitted for the Master's use.* The more perfectly and freely you consecrate yourselves to him in the covenant-communion, the more securely you will be kept in the hour of temptation, when the world shall try you, and Satan shoot fiery darts at you, and your hearts sink within you. The more perfectly and freely you appropriate Christ by faith to your own souls in the covenant-communion, the more will you please him. Call him your own. Cleave to him as your own. Take him in all his offices, and all his fulness. He has loved you: see that you love him. He has served you: see that you serve him. From the nuptial communion go on your way, hand in hand with him in your path of life. Consult him in perplexity. Flee to him in times of danger. Lean upon him when your weary steps stagger in rough places. Never distrust him; never desert or betray him. Love him always. As you lift the Cup

to your lips say, before the spectators of earth and heaven, I give myself to Christ in this cup of blood, for time and for eternity. I take Christ to be my Redeemer and my best Friend.

He will not forsake you. You may have sorrows, but he will soothe them; trials, but he will bear you through. As you approach your last hour, he will come to your bed of death, (if it please him to give you a bed to die on,) and, cleaving the vault of heaven with your released spirit in his arms, he will say, *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.* *There* again you shall sing the song of communion, with *him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

XVI.

Christ and him Crucified.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

PHILOSOPHY, so called, *in* the church, and worldlings and sin *out* of it, have often aimed at precisely the same thing. They have, indeed, had different motives, employed different arguments about religion, and put on very different appearances before the eyes of the church and the world. But after all, their mode has been very much the same. And it is very remarkable how that species of philosophizing about the vital subjects of Christianity, which endeavors to show these things to be only according to the analogies of nature, and therefore only part and parcel of the general administration of God over his creatures, precisely agrees with that loved train of pretended reasoning among irreligious men in which they aim to get rid of the obligations of the Bible by appealing to nature. These last, these men of worldliness, profess to respect *nature*, her laws, her economy, and all her aims; and they profess to be willing to receive all her obligations, even those of a religious kind. But they have a great reluctance to take

a single step out of her boundaries, and, going away from the dim regions of her twilight, to come out upon the field of peculiar revelation, all luminous as it is with new and distinct instructions. They will take the Bible as far as they think it agrees with the doctrines of nature, or as far as all its theory, obligations, and promises lie along the line of a philosophical analogy. But beyond this they are reluctant to go. And beyond this many philosophizers in the pulpit seem equally reluctant to go. And hence, any point in theory, any doctrine about God, his laws, or his administration, any provisions or promises, any mode of vengeance or mode of mercy that comes up in the Bible, must be subjected to the trial of philosophy, and laid down on the line of their pretended analogy. With a little modesty, indeed, they will only demand to *explain* the Bible by the world, and not maintain its opposition to the world; but their explanation, as it falls on the ears of either those within the church or those without, tends more to fill the minds of men with *this* "philosophy," than with the Bible's Christ, and tends more to fit the souls of men to stay *in* this world than to depart out of it to a very different one.

With both of these classes of persons the mistake is more deep and subtle than they are at all ready to conceive. It lies in the very *misconception of the nature and application of their own rule.* What analogy is, and where it lies, are the grand points of their common blunder. They place it wrong. God *is*, indeed, consistent. Traces of resemblances run through all his works. But these men of pretended philosophy commit the grand blunder of comparing the high and holy science of religion with the minor matters of a temporary world, instead of com-

paring it with God, from whom it emanates, and running the line of their analogy up to the final judgment-seat, and away on the broad eternity beyond it. The question should be, *not* is this duty, doctrine, or promise like *nature*, but is it like God? Philosophy is wrong, reason is wrong, religious speculation is wrong, whenever it does not put the universe at the feet of its infinite Author.

This "religion of nature" as they call it, ought not to be expected by them, at most, to do anything more than fit men to live *in* the world, among its rocks and winds and trees and blossoms, and under the clouds that hang and the sun that burns above them. They ought not to expect it to give them lessons to die, to leave this world and live in *another*, where "nature," as they call it, is not only dumb, but dead and gone! burnt up—world and heavens together! Strange, that they do not perceive that they are the most *un*-analogical reasoners in the world! They expect *time* to be a full index of eternity. A dispensation that shall end, they expect to have enough in it to explain a dispensation that is endless. They expect nature, that shall die, to unfold the whole economy of immortality; a single letter of God's alphabet to tell the whole embodied wisdom of God's omniscience. Whereas, if they had not strayed out of the field of analogy they would expect no such thing. They would expect God in the spiritual system to be entirely above God in the natural system; and lessons that bear on eternity to be as much beyond those that bear on time, as the mighty sweep of eternal ages surpasses the little measure of an hour-glass. And when, under the teachings and leadings of nature, they have mounted among the stars, they would never imagine that the *new heavens and new earth* which God shall *create*,

wherein dwelleth righteousness, can be explained by all the grandeur of God's footsteps along the pavement of the milky way.

Things seen are temporal. Things unseen are eternal. And if God, presiding over eternity and spirits, is more majestic and awful than God presiding over temporal things, then analogy, the *true* analogy, demands of us to *expect* him to furnish an economy for the eternal life of sinners (if he furnish any at all) which nothing in the material world of nature can ever resemble. One field of God's world is more glorious than another. The blossoms of the spring-time are not alike, either in their beauty or their fragrance. And the analogy which would read God must not, therefore, *confine* God—must not expect to find *here*, amid the teachings of mere nature, and by the sight of mere human eyes, the highest lessons to bear on an eternity to come. But it ought to expect that an economy which seeks our eternal salvation shall bear higher marks upon it; and that, as it mounts toward the heavens, it shall become more like God, and shall never reach its highest point till it reaches that spot where the eternal throne blazes—where, lo! *in the midst of the throne is the Lamb that was slain.*

And, after all, redemption is more of a peculiarity than of an analogy. It is an analogy only with God. It is not an analogy with nature. It is like God. It is unlike the world; and the apostle thought it so: *I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom* (philosophy), *declaring unto you the testimony of God.* In opposition to this, he tells us what he did do: *I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

You will please to notice his discrimination (it justifies the mode of this sermon): First, his discrimination between what he calls *excellency of speech or wisdom*, and Jesus Christ; he rejects the one to cleave to the other. Second, his discrimination further, *after* he has fixed on the great object of his preaching—Jesus Christ. It is not Christ simply, nor in his common attributes or actions. It is not his birth, his miracles, his words of mercy, his mission to earth, nor his departure out of it. When the apostle aims to tell us *definitely* what is the very essence of his preaching, he tells us of the *death* of Christ—*him crucified*, says he. When he would gather us at the very centering spot of Christianity, where we may see all its significance, he leads us up by the Cross of the dying Redeemer of sinners. That is the spot, and there is the object for human eyes and human hearts. You will go there to-day, my brethren. *Christ crucified* will be set forth among you. You are to memorialize his *death*. You are not fit for that service; no, no! you will only profane and contaminate the ordinance; *you will eat that bread and drink that cup unworthily*, if your hearts cannot sympathize with the *crucifixion* of the text, and if you do not feel that for you there is something eminently peculiar in the *death* of the Son of God. I hope you will feel so. I trust you will. For that we have been endeavoring. On last Lord's day we made this pulpit resound with the words, *No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself: . . . we live unto the Lord: . . . we die unto the Lord: . . . for to this end Christ both lived, and died, and rose.* During the week we took up the subject again, and made this pulpit resound with the words, *Thou art worthy to open the book, . . . for*

thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by thy blood. But we have not done yet; and if your hearts do not justify us, as they ought to do, the text does, when we mention the same death again: *I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

All the apostle's preaching, his masterly reasonings, his condensation of the history of the Old Testament, his examination of the ancient economy of types and shadows, his unequalled eloquence when his trains of thought lead him up among the attributes of God; all these have reference to the death of the Son of God. All he desired was, to lead sinners to the blood of atonement, and, from that starting-point, to set them on their upward march to meet God in the skies. And that is all we desire. Bad as your sins are, sad and sorrowful within you as your hearts can be, estranged and cold as your affections may be, we know that the felt influences of the death of Christ constitute all you need. Aim to have them. Accompany us for a few moments, as we explain and demonstrate the discrimination of the text, assigning a very marked peculiarity to the crucifixion of the Saviour.

This is our theme. We are going to maintain that the death of Jesus Christ deserves all the consideration that St. Paul gave to it; that it is the one grand and supreme feature of the Christian religion, lying beyond all the analogies of all that we are accustomed to call "nature;" and that it is *the one thing* which gives value to Christianity. We enter upon the theme. We name some distinct ideas,—hints,—rather than fully-expanded arguments.

I. We begin with the ordinance of the Supper

We name it first, lest if we should reserve it for the last, (its proper place,) we should not have sufficient time left to give it the consideration which, to-day, it justly demands. It deserves no small degree of consideration. You have no other ordinance like it; and you ought most seriously to consider the circumstances of solemnity under which it was instituted, and the deep significance of privilege and obligation which hangs around it. We shall remark soon, how the achievements of Jesus Christ all looked towards his *death*. When he instituted your ordinance, that solemn hour had come. He was going to be smitten. He knew it. He wished it. Nature shrank! Jesus Christ quailed at the horrors he anticipated, when in the garden he *sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground*, and when he fell prostrate under the burden of that prayer, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!* But though he quailed, he did not retreat. *Not as I will, but as thou wilt, . . . for this hour came I into the world.* No man that reads the New Testament can doubt for a moment that the soul of the Saviour felt death with an unequalled solemnity and fearfulness. But the hour was come. Assembled together, the little college of the disciples was communing with its Master, and had just finished the Paschal ordinance, the most interesting, significant, and solemn of all the ancient divine appointments. Judas was gone out to betray him. None but friends, but tried hearts, remained. At that moment the Saviour instituted the Supper. Its significance was his death. He transferred all the solemnities of the passover (which he had just abolished) to this new and *not* typical ordinance, and extended the obligation of its observance down through the lapse of ages, to

the time of his second coming. We obey his injunction. We celebrate his death. We utter our covenant oath, not like the Israelite, when, sprinkled with bullocks' blood himself, he stood before the blood-sprinkled altar and solemnly swore, *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do, and be obedient;* but we utter this oath, now a thousand times more solemn, when we handle the symbols of this amazing death.

Now, is there not a marked peculiarity given, in this ordinance, to the *death* of Jesus Christ? At a most solemn hour the ordinance was instituted. It took the place of an institution hallowed and revered for ages. It represents a fact about which Jesus Christ seems to have been more affected than he ever was about anything else. Jesus did other things than die. He descended from heaven; he was miraculously conceived; he was born; he was tempted; he was a *man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;* he preached; he raised the dead; he was an example of sinless obedience; and after he had laid aside the *linen clothes* of the grave and the *napkin that was bound about his head*, he ascended into heaven, followed by the wondering gaze of hundreds, and *a cloud received him out of their sight.*

But you have no ordinance to celebrate any of these things. You memorialize only his *death*, not his birth, the very date of which is concealed from the knowledge of all mankind. The heathen and the politicians celebrate birthdays. We celebrate a death-day. Our ordinance, the most solemn and significant of all our observances, gives a very marked peculiarity to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. While he takes care to conceal his time of birth, while he passes over all his other

achievements, wondrous as they were, at the moment when he would concentrate the souls of his disciples upon himself and bind them to duty and to God, he memorializes his *death—only* his death.

For my part, if Jesus Christ were on earth only as an example of righteousness, I cannot conceive why he did not institute for his followers a birth-feast, instead of a *death-feast.* If his living, and not his dying, was the great object of his mission, propriety would seem to require of him to make our memorial bring his *living* to mind, as men of the world celebrate the birthdays of statesmen and warriors and princes whom they would honor. But the grand matter of his mission was *not* his living. It was his dying. And with beautiful propriety, when we are called on to memorialize the Saviour with most solemnity, with most tenderness and affection, with the very oath of the new covenant, binding ourselves with the highest of all obligations, we then memorialize his death. He taught this to us. He instituted the memorial for us. We shall be sorry if any heart fails to-day of marking the peculiarity of the blessed ordinance.

II. If you had time to listen to the passages, it would be very interesting to recite to you a collection of scriptures, to show you how all the other parts of Jesus Christ's earthly mission and ministry looked toward his death. It would be an extensive collection. Let a few suffice. His dying was the very purpose of his incarnation. *As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.* Why? for what purpose? *That through* DEATH *he might destroy him that had the power of death.... It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.* For what purpose? *That*

he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. And Romans v. 10 tells us, *We are reconciled to God by the* DEATH *of his Son.*

This death being the supreme purpose of his coming, he always kept it in mind. He made reference to it in strange places. An affectionate woman anoints his head with precious ointment, and he justifies her affection and the costliness of its offering by an idea taken from his own coming death: *She did it for my burial; it shall be told for a memorial of her.* When the three disciples had come down with him from the Mount of Transfiguration, he said to them, *Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.* His death was constantly in his mind: *Elias is come already . . . and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed; likewise shall also the Son of man suffer. From that time forth Jesus began to show unto his disciples how that he must go up unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.*

Even in that dark hour of heaviness, when his soul was *exceeding sorrowful unto death*, and human nature, overwhelmed and confounded, began to be *sore amazed*, —when he was forced to exclaim, *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour*, —he repressed the prayer, looked death in the face as the very object of his mission; *but for this cause came I unto this hour.* When, a prisoner in the hands of his foes, indignant affection seized the sword for his righteous vindication, he said, *Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* And finally, when malice had come to the end of her work, and the unpitying vengeance which

hunted him from the beginning was glutted with his blood,—when, as he hung on the Cross, he had commended his mother to his beloved disciple,—after the vinegar, the gall, and the spear, and after the soldiers had parted among them the garments of their dying victim,—then he exclaimed, *It is finished;* and gave up the ghost. *Dying* had finished his work. He *came* to die. All his ministry looked to this, and a multitude of scriptures, proving it to you, show that marked importance is attributed to his dying.

I know of but one idea in the Bible which even *seems* to limit or qualify the force of this argument. It is the resurrection of the Saviour. It is not to be denied nor forgotten that the scriptures attribute a magnitude of importance to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. *If Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain; ye are yet in your sins.* We are not to undervalue this resurrection; but we are not to consider it as the substance, nor even as the crowning part of the work of Christ. We are not to be affected by it as we are to be affected by his death. His death was important to us as *purchasing* our redemption: his resurrection, as *proving* it purchased. The one was the *price* of our souls: the other, the demonstration that God Almighty had *accepted* it. By his death and burial he had come to the end of all this humiliation of his redeeming work. Henceforth, the scene changes. He went, captive—he comes back a conqueror. Man rolls a *great stone* upon the mouth of his tomb—but an angel from heaven rolls it away. He rises to take possession of those prerogatives which he has purchased by his death. His resurrection is a part of *his* triumph and our own. He is *declared to be the Son of God with* POWER, *by the resurrection from the*

dead; and because he lives, we shall live also. With these recollections, we shall not be in danger of forgetting the distinct and peculiar importance which belongs to the death of Christ, as something of more value than the ordinary parts of his ministry.

III. The peculiarity of significance and importance which belong to the atoning death of Christ, may be seen from the forbearance of God. That forbearance is something to be accounted for. It is far more extensive here among sinners, than on any ordinary principles we could have supposed it would be. God bears with sinners who seem to have become fully ripened for vengeance. He utters warning after warning in their ears. With manifest reluctance he rises to execute his deserved and dreadful threatenings. Before that time comes, he tells them that *judgment is his strange work.* He calls to their mind how, *many a time, he turned his anger away and did not stir up all his wrath.* He says, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?*

Now, in what way are we to account for this long-suffering of God? We cannot account for it on the principle that God is waiting for man to cancel his own guilt, and return of himself to his duty and his God. It is plainly stated in the Bible, that man's power is utterly insufficient to atone for sin and free himself from the sway of corruption within him. We can not account for it on the principle of God's natural benevolence, for we have heard of another race of sinners to whom such forbearance was never extended: the fallen angels are *in chains of darkness.* And the Bible itself unfolds the reason for the difference, in that expression, *He took not on him the nature of angels.* It is because of what Christ

has done in his atoning sacrifice, that forbearance is extended to sinners here. That sacrifice has rendered their salvation possible; and the execution of God's avenging justice is stayed for a little while, that sinners may have time to repent and flee to Christ and be delivered from going down to hell. But for the death of Christ, sinning man would have known no more of God's long-suffering than sinning angels knew. It is that death, with its wonderful efficacy in opening the way of salvation to sinners, which constitutes the reason why *the long-suffering of God waits.* It is the reason why to-day guilty sinners in this house, who still reject Jesus Christ, are not blaspheming God amid the despair of hell! But for the very death which they neglect, instead of turning their back upon *the Table of the Lord* here, they would be the companions of sinning angels whom the natural benevolence of God did not reach and redeem.—Surely we have another proof of the peculiarity we named.

IV. In order to condense our materials as much as possible, we put two ideas together: the creation, and the providence of God. The Bible has told us why material things were made: not for their own sakes, nor for all the magnificent displays of power and wisdom which they contain. The purpose of creation terminates on Christ: *all things were created* FOR *him.* That moral government and glorious redemption which he exercises brought the world into being. Redemption, too, is the grand object of divine providence, and the atonement is the very centre and substance of redemption. Whatever unbelievers and worldlings may think, this material world was built, and it stands yet, and it is ruled for the sake of those moral displays and achieve-

ments whose centre is the Cross of the Redeemer of men. The events of four thousand years looked forward to that, and, notwithstanding the fixed habits of warfare among the nations, notwithstanding the maddened passions of ambitious and infuriated men, when the Redeemer was to come into the world, peace touched the nations to quiet, and the clash of arms was still. The devil does not own this world; and wickedness does not make it worse than before the flood, simply because the promises which hang on the Cross of the Redeemer have not all been fulfilled,—simply because *our Lord reigneth: the government is upon his shoulder.* The millennium is coming. For these reasons the world is not a wandering star, abandoned in wrath, discarded from use, rushing to destruction; but is still held for a design, and turned to an account the most glorious. Its Maker has not denounced nor disowned his property. It may be a rebel, but he is still a sovereign. It may be recusant, but he is still its Lord. *The Lamb is in the midst of the throne;* and for that reason the world has not *staggered like a drunken man*, and reeled and sunk to ruin.

It is hardly conceivable how any rational mind can ever imagine that God created and governs the world for the sake of displaying his power merely, as *he weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing;* or for the sake of all that manifestation of mind made in this wonderful world and among the wonderful beings who inhabit it; or, surely, for the sake of all that moral excellence which the very best ages of the world have ever manifested. Put the church out of the question, omit that little company of believers who love the Cross, and who, by its

influence, begin to have something of its spirit, and we should like to challenge any unbeliever's own reason to answer the question, whether he could think it to be worth while for God to build and govern such a world as this, for the sake of all the felicity, the intelligence, the power, the moral dignity there is about it. He could not affirm this. Reason would be compelled to rush into the arms of revelation. Some higher moral good must come; some more dignified bliss and aims than the ungodly have; some more elevated attainments in moral propriety and moral government, or this world's existence and control will be only a blot upon the reputation of its builder and ruler. The *seven-sealed Book* must be opened by the *Lamb that was slain.*

The Bible is reasonable, and a refuge for reason,—for reason otherwise confounded by the irregularities of this distressed world. It says to us, *He hath created all things by Jesus Christ, to the* INTENT *that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the* CHURCH, *the manifold wisdom of God.* The *church* is the body of Christ. Yea, better; she is the *Bride of Christ.* She is the purchase of his death. To the Cross, therefore, to that one spot, to that wondrous *crucifixion*, there belongs a very marked peculiarity. Creation and providence are subordinate to the moral government and glories which stand connected with this dying Redeemer of sinners.

V. No matter how deep conviction may be, or how distressing the fears of future judgment and wrath that gather over a sinner's mind, there is nothing in all these which ever leads to an ingenuous and genuine repentance. I appeal to all the hearts in this assembly. I appeal to you, ye *stout-hearted and far from righteous*

ness, who neglect Christ to-day; ye who have often tried, by summoning up the recollections of your guilt, and by figuring the damnation of hell in your imagination, to drive yourselves to a penitent hatred of sin; I appeal to you to say, if all these horrid images have not *failed*, and left you as fond of sin and as far from God as before? I appeal to you who come here to honor Christ to-day. Do you not remember the *wormwood and the gall* of those dreadful convictions, when you were afraid to lie down at night, lest you should wake in hell? when you almost expected to be made a *vessel of wrath*, and *be dashed to pieces* by the thunders of God's just indignation? Do you not remember that those horrors did not make you repent? that the more you felt them the more you rebelled, the more you despaired the more *fit* you seemed to be for the dreadful vengeance which you feared? and that the calmness and soothing of a genuine repentance came over you only as you went up, in your wretchedness, and poured out your griefs at the foot of that Cross where hung the bleeding Redeemer of men? Oh! it was the persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, it was this DEATH and its efficacy, which first touched your heart with penitential sorrow. Then you felt that sin was no common evil against no common friend, and that it met with what it needed—no common mercy.

VI. For a sixth argument, we will say the same thing of a gracious confidence in God. Foolhardiness, I allow, may be confident anywhere on this soil of probation, and before the unfolding of that coming *indignation which shall consume the adversaries.* It may appeal to nature and history, and blind itself by a thousand delusions, and *believe a lie*, to carve out a high road to de-

struction. But the sober, reasonable, prayerful sinner has but one ground and one plea of confidence in God. That one is enough. The sinner who trembled at divine justice, who felt his heart sink within him, and began to wish the *mountains and rocks might fall upon him and hide him from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne*, may now lift up his head and bid defiance to a whole universe of accusation. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died.*

VII. For a seventh argument, we say the same thing of communion with God. This communion is enjoyed *only* through the medium of a crucified Christ. Through him we come *boldly* to the *throne of grace.* Through him we *have access* to the Father. The child of God NEVER loses the light of God's countenance, never falters in communion with God, except in proportion as his heart fails to embrace, as his *own*, his crucified Redeemer. *Nature* can not have this communion. Grace only can lead to it. The idea of PARDON for a sinner is not found anywhere in nature. It is whispered in no wind, twinkled by no star, graven on no granite of earth, betokened by no flower's sweet beauty, echoed in no deep anthem of the ocean's roar. Nature never promises forgiveness to a sinner. Philosophy can not search it out. The world, the universe has not a single hint that forgiveness is possible, much less that adoption into God's family is possible. Christ crucified reveals and secures both; and therefore a sinner may *triumph in Christ*, God being

"His Father and his Friend."

So of all other graces, privileges, felicities, hopes. We

speak to believers. *They* need no argument. They *know* it is so. They know that all Christian delights, improvement, and foretastes of heaven result from their appreciating that unequalled divine love which operated by the death of the eternal Son of God. To them the Throne is sweet because *in the* MIDST *of the throne is the Lamb that was* SLAIN.

It were easy to add to these arguments. Proofs of the same doctrine may be drawn from every quarter. All the foundations of Christianity, all the good there is in it here might be summoned to our aid. We could show you how the spirit of *worldliness* will not give way till the disciple looks at his Lord upon the Cross, and learns to say, *The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world:*—how the spirit of *revenge* will not give way, nor the spirit of forgiveness come up over the heart, till the disciple *considers him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,* and hears him praying in death, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And after we had shown the efficacy of this death all along the pathway of the believer, and found in it the only solace for him on his bed of dying, we could take you up to his seat of song in heaven, to hear that anthem of glory, *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy* BLOOD:—*unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.*

My hearers, have we not made good the declaration with which we commenced? Are we not overwhelmed with proofs that our religion is peculiar—is like God—beyond nature—and that the central point of its glorious significance is the crucifixion of the Son of God?

My brethren, as we come to the communion to-day, let us bring this idea along with us. Let us give our solemnity all the peculiarity it claims. Let us remember that this death which we celebrate is the most amazing thing that ever transpired in the universe. God himself never did anything else like it. The Son of God expires! The rocks were rent! Graves were opened, and *many saints arose and came out of their graves and went into the holy city!* And darkness hung like a pall over the heavens!—With what solemnity should ye celebrate such a death! Will ye approach that Table as a common spot? Solemn warnings caution you against it. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself!* Remember, he who is *declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead*, holds in his hand a *rod of iron*, to *break* his *enemies*, and *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel!* If you come not in good conscience to enter into covenant with God, sincerely purposing to *die unto sin and live unto Christ;* if you come not to take shelter for your guilty head in his blood; if you come not to present *your bodies and spirits a living sacrifice unto God*, henceforth to be his and *not your own;* if you have no sense of your deep and eternal obligation to serve him, as *bought with a price*, God will frown upon your approach, and you may expect the just judgments which he pronounces on those who say, *The Table of the Lord is contemptible.*

On the other hand, you cannot escape the solemn obligation by neglect. No, never! The dying command which calls you there, is not to be forgotten nor unheeded. You *must* come, and come with a sincere and believing heart, or you trample on the dying com-

mand of Christ! Those sinners of this assembly who neglect this ordinance, hugging the world still and withholding their hearts from Christ, commit a dreadful offence. God deliver me from their guilt! I cannot unfold it. St. Paul seems to have been overwhelmed with the idea of it. He cannot paint it. He cannot measure it. He merely asks, *Of how much sorer condemnation shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?* Here, then, sinner, read your doom. The blood of the Son of God will cry to heaven against you! It will ascend from these courts to-day. Why will you not heed it, and tremble? What reason can you give to God Almighty why you are not, to-day, among his people, a penitent believer and a comforted sinner? You ought to be there. Soon, he will call you to give an account for the blood of his Son. He will say to you, *Thou hast denied the Holy one! there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins!* rejecting the blood of atonement, thou hast lost heaven!!

My brethren, that dreadful end is the doom of an unbelieving *neglect.* You cannot contemplate it without horror! You cannot imitate these despisers of Jesus! Let not fear tempt you to do it. Come freely to the Lord's Table. Come in welcome. Come in confidence and love. Come to swear eternal allegiance to the Prince of Life. Come to be comforted, refreshed, strengthened. Come in all your weakness. Come to be forgiven. Come to take all the blessings which the God of bounty has provided for sinners. *Ye are a chosen generation.* God loves you, if you love Jesus. He will love you to the end. From the bed of death he will transport you home to a sinless heaven; and after your

tears and trials and conflicts, it shall be told, amid the alleluiahs of the upper sanctuary, *These are they which have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

XVII.

He loved them to the end.

"Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."—JOHN xiii. 1.

IT was not without design that we arranged the exercises which come around this season, and the ideas which we proposed to present to you from this passage, so as to bring the concluding exercise before you this morning. You are here to-day on another communion festival. You are coming to the Table of the Lord. You have stepped over another of those spaces which separate one sacramental occasion from another; and now, as you recollect who it is that has spared you, has held you up, and helped you on, you remember that you have got so much nearer the end, and come to-day to set up another of those way-marks which denote your progress towards the city of God. You have been accustomed to heed these seasons with strong and peculiar interest. You have been accustomed to look forward to them, and, surrounded with memorials of life's frailty, to reflect that you could not be certain of reaching another You have been accustomed to look back upon

them, and as you added one more to the list you were numbering up, you took it as a fresh memorial to be cherished among your grateful recollections. You have been accustomed to enter into the exercises of these occasions, fearful that your heart would fall beneath their love, that your soul would not respond to the measure of your Lord's affection, and that you would be forced to go out from the Table of your Lord, the burden still heavy upon your heart, and darkness and clouds still hanging over the pathway that conducts you to another world. It would not be strange if such a mournful sensibility and fear possessed your soul this moment. The most difficult of all the offices of a minister of the gospel is, unquestionably, to conduct the worship of such occasions properly, to lead the minds and hearts of the people so into the truth of God, into the love of Jesus, that they shall come up to such seasons in a fit frame of mind to commune with God, and go, profited, confirmed, and cheered, to lead more holy lives, and prepare more rapidly for death and heaven. And while, in our continued exercises, we have aimed to conduct you rightly towards the communion-table, as we have unfolded this text, it may be, it must be, that we have failed to profit some of you, and you still fear that the sun will go down upon you to-night, and leave you no more like Christ and heaven than you were when it rose upon you this morning!

These are precious seasons. They ought not to be lost. They are covenant occasions. Christ opens the door of his banqueting house. He calls! He calls to you! God bows the heavens. The Holy Ghost comes down. There breathes over these solemnities the atmosphere of another world, and the soul ought not to be

profitless where Jehovah proposes to take the sinner into an alliance with himself!

And though you have gone over these passages of the text before,—though you have wrestled in prayer as you looked forward to this day,—still, there is a deeper measure in this love mentioned in the text than earthly lips and earthly aids are sufficient to make you understand! Pause, then, again! Stop on the threshold this morning! Think, sinner, what you are, and what Jesus Christ is. You—wretch, outcast, unwórthy, sold under the curse, on the high road to hell, the *enemy of God:* Jesus Christ still loved you. His love brought him from heaven. It bore him through a life of sorrows. It nailed him to the Cross. If there is any one failure of human nature more signal than any other, it is the failure to be duly influenced and affected by the eternal, unfailing love of the Son of God! Pause, then. Lift up your heart and plead for aid. Say to the risen Saviour, O thou *Rock of Ages*, thou infinite Author of these solemnities, aid thy frail creature! Thou didst perfect thy work upon the Cross; come now and perfect it in this heart! O God, let this love, these solemnities, be our salvation! Let the incarnation of thy Son, the sorrows and sufferings of his remembered history, the wrath which he bore,—not for himself, but poured on his head as he stood a Victim for us,—his prayers and tears and strong crying, his insults, his crown of thorns, his robe of mockery, his vinegar and gall, the death to which thou didst deliver him up, the faithfulness and power by which thou didst raise him from the dead loaded with the spoils of death and hell—let all these truths, this wondrous love, work, by thy good Spirit, our souls' eternal salvation!

We are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest . . . but we are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all . . . and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling. . . . . God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make me *perfect in every good work, to do* thy *will, working in* me *that which is well pleasing in* thy *sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever.*

And may God hear your prayer, and aid you to understand *the love of Christ*, who *loved his own which were in the world, and loved them to the end!*

We will not trouble you to listen to even the briefest outline of our three former sermons on this text. You have been told of the Saviour's life and love. His life, his death, demonstrated his love. Let your hearts take up the subject where we left it. They will do so without any reluctance, when we announce to you the doctrine of this morning. *The love of Christ is a most wonderful love, and ought most sensibly and perpetually to affect us.* This is our doctrine. We name to you eight particular ideas for its elucidation:

1. The freeness and sovereignty of Christ's love.
2. His love was personal.
3. It was spontaneous and disinterested
4. It was unlimited by the condition and character of sinners who needed it.
5. It lasts to his chosen people through all their changes and trials.

6. Its magnitude is inconceivable.
7. It is unchangeable.
8. It is eternal, and ever more and more unfolding its excellencies.

These are the ideas, and, although too many for our time, we cannot spare any of them.

1. The love of Christ is infinitely *free* and *sovereign*. It was from the beginning one of the promptings of his own nature. If we look for the cause of it in man, we shall look in vain. There was nothing in the lost race of sinners to furnish any claim to his favor. Never was punishment more justly due, and so loudly called for. The greatest of all possible evils had been perpetrated by our lost race; the greatest of all indignities had been offered to the God of heaven. The righteous penalty of the law might have been suffered, without the least impropriety, to take its course, and the pathway of humanity which leads out of this world might have been left to lead every mortal that traverses it down to the wretchedness and horrors of the lost! The glories of the Godhead would forever have been untarnished; not an angel in heaven would have wondered, after seeing the dreadful rebellion of this world, if the groans of every death-bed had been tempered with the horrors of hell, and as earth lost an inhabitant the pit had gained another victim. God was under no obligation to save us. Christ was under no obligation to redeem us. The race was guilty and lost; the grave opened her mouth, and hell was moving toward her prey. Jesus Christ, *the Ancient of Days*, the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father, beheld a vast multitude of immortal beings, lost. They were lost to all righteousness; lost to hope, to happiness, and to God. They were lost under all

the righteous economy of God, his holy law and providence, to all eternity. No extent of suffering could save them; it would neither expiate their sin, nor, leading them to repentance, cause them to cease from its perpetration. They were *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* This Jesus Christ, this King of ineffable glory, took a motive for their deliverance from the benevolence of his own nature. He was drawn to the work of redemption solely by his own good-will.

There is,—we are fully persuaded there is,—an extent to the significance of this idea which we shall scarcely be able to make you comprehend. We are aware that benevolence forms a part of the divine character, and that if the Deity could cease to possess this quality in an infinite degree, he would cease to be the Deity, the ever *blessed God.* We are aware, also, that his own glory is enhanced by the salvation of sinners; that that display of the moral perfections of the Godhead which hangs such wonders of excellence and moral beauty around the salvation of sinners, shall be admired and wondered at by adoring angels in heaven, and all the redeemed of the Lord for ever. The Bible will not let us forget that those outgoings of infinite wisdom and power and love from the Godhead which reach this revolted world; which throw barriers across the sinner's pathway to hell; which have erected the Cross just by the side of it, compelling him, if he will go to perdition, to go there wading in the blood of the Redeemer of men; which have flung wide open the pathway to heaven, and poured down light thereon from the throne of glory; which have mingled a cup of consolation for dying lips; which have gathered already an innumerable company of happy saints into the City of God, to be with God, and be like

God, and enjoy God for ever and ever,—the Bible will not let us forget that these achievements of salvation are for the honor of Jehovah, to the *praise of the glory of his grace*. But, after all, if we are not mistaken in the Bible's meaning, the free, sovereign love of Jesus Christ for sinners took its rise from something else than those motives of glory. The Bible certainly does lead us often to step off in our contemplations from all created foundations, and stand upon the steps that lead up to the eternal Throne. As we take our place there, it rehearses in our ears, *Jehovah hath made all things for himself*. We would not forget the lesson. But, if we err not, the Bible never mentions this idea to us except for two purposes. One is a very dreadful one. It is, to bring all the terrors of God to bear on the hearts of the ungodly. It is, to bid defiance to the pride of Pharaohs, and Nebuchadnezzars, and Herods, and Pilates, and let them know,—every rebellious heart among the ungodly know,—that they cannot even sin except by sufferance, and if they will rebel, God has his *bridle in their mouths*, and his *hook in their nose*, and will finally glorify his justice when he locks them in hell. The Bible often does this; it says of wicked men and wicked devils, God will be glorified; he will make even their malice to glorify him.

The other purpose is a very blessed one. If, by experience, we know any thing about the matter, the most difficult of all persuasions of truth to bring home to the human heart is the full and perfect persuasion of the favor of God. When his awful attributes are known, and the sinner's own unworthiness and guilt are known; when the realized purity of God brings its light into the heart, to detect its vileness, to

reveal its guilt, and especially to disclose to the sinner the awful imperfection of even his repentance, his contrition,—that we cannot even be miserable rightly; then it is that despair begins to gather its horrors, and the sinner is ready to say, God cannot save me! I must lie down in woe! To meet this erroneous conclusion, the Bible takes up the same argument as before. It lets the sinner make himself as vile and guilty as he can. But, after all, it shows him that God can draw motives for saving him from his own infinite perfections and glory. It asks him to step off from creation, to stand up by the Throne of the Infinite One, and hear those words issuing from the lips of him who sitteth upon it, FOR MINE OWN SAKE . . . *for the sake of my own great* NAME. The Bible bids defiance to despair just as it bids defiance to daring. It tells the trembling sinner, ready to drop into hell, that God can save him, from motives drawn from his own infinite and uncreated nature.

Beyond these two objects, we are not aware that the scriptures ever resort to this argument. Certainly, their most common account of the love of God to sinners does not attribute that love to the desire of God to enhance his own glory. Jesus Christ's love was infinitely pure and free and sovereign. The Deity will be glorified by it; but love, spontaneous, free, sovereign, the benevolence of his own nature, brought Jesus Christ from the skies, and took him to the manger, the Cross, and the tomb. If it were just to enter into any such abstractions, if the Deity could ever act without any reference to his own glory and honor, we would say to you that Jesus Christ would have done all he has to save you, moved by his own benevolence and your miseries, without any regard to the glories resulting from his redeeming achievements.

But you *have* the idea. He came to your redemption, drawn by his own good-will. To accomplish it, an infinite sacrifice was indispensable. This sacrifice he offered. He obeyed, he suffered, he died. He freely gave himself up for you. *He made his soul an offering for sin.* The soil of this guilty world drank his blood. His lifeless and mangled body was carried to the grave. *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die.* Christ *commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners,* he *died for the ungodly.*

2. The love of Christ was personal. Our hearts would fail of something which they ought to apprehend if we suffered not this idea to enter them. If we merely regarded the sufferings of the Saviour as a great governmental transaction, having its primary or sole reference to the universe, or world at large, our impressions would be too general, and cold, and unaffecting. The whole government of God, indeed, will be affected by the Saviour's death, but that is only incidental. Christ died, my hearers, for just such creatures as you and I; to save just such guilty souls. The very first trophy of his sacrifice, after his own death, was a thief whom he pardoned on the Cross, and took along with him as he went up to the paradise of God. That guilty, polluted being he made the companion of his journey as he entered into the world of glory. Those polluted lips, which, quivering in death, could only utter on earth the beseeching cry, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,* before the sun went down upon the world were uttering words of glory in heaven, *Who loved me and gave himself a ransom for me.* That very thief, whose ignominy and shame were designed to enhance the Saviour's own, was washed by

his blood, and borne away to be an eternal monument to his praise. You are as welcome, every sinner of you—you are as welcome to the love of Jesus as he was. If you will come to Christ, he will love you as personally as he loved him. He will pardon you as freely. And when you die, he will conduct you as he did him in the same opened path to immortality. *He will come again, and receive you unto himself*, and translate you to the *house of many mansions.* The gospel brings you a personal offer. *The word is nigh* THEE, *even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that if thou . . . shalt believe the Lord Jesus, thou shalt be saved.*

3. The Saviour's love was disinterested. He could do without sinners. For *himself* it was not necessary that he should save them. He was infinitely above the possibility of wanting anything from the hands of any created being. He was supremely glorious and happy. In the bosom of the Father he enjoyed, from all eternity, the boundless and ineffable delights of his complacency. Heaven was his throne. The universe rose at his bidding. *For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him.* If this world fell, he could spare it. If its inhabitants revolted, he could spare them. He had made other worlds and other races of beings, and he could do it again. If he had chosen to annihilate the world and all that was in it, or had chosen to leave a guilty race to tread their dark way down to their deserved doom, the world, the race, would scarcely have been missed from the immensity of his works. *Thrones and principalities and*

powers would still have stood in heaven, and myriads of voices would still have swelled the eternal alleluiahs in the temple of God. This world gone, Christ, who made it, could easily have made another in its place, and the spot where we now stand might have been filled with beings more excellent, exalted, and happy, sinless, and praising and enjoying their Creator. Jesus Christ could make another world *easier* than he could redeem this. For that purpose he would need no manger-cradle, no *form of a servant*, no gibes and sneers of sinners, no cross, no grave. But had he done so, there would have been no hope for you. He preferred to save you. He preferred to leave the Throne, out of disinterested love to miserable sinners, and to endure the depths of humiliation and pain to pluck them out of the jaws of destruction. It was his love that moved him to it. It was his delight to be the friend of the friendless, the helper of the feeble and lost. He rejoiced, and he rejoices still, he makes it his glory and delight, to pardon the guilty, to accept and sanctify the sinful, to hold up the faltering and the weak, to encourage the contrite and fearful, to speak heaven's peace to the heart of penitence, to throw heaven's light over the track in which sinners travel to eternity. It is because Jesus Christ *delights* to bless the wretched that *he loved his own unto the end.* His love is disinterested and spontaneous.

4. Jesus Christ's love is unlimited by anything in the condition and character of those who need it. It has extended to man in all ages since the fall. It has extended its consolations to the dying beggar on his bed of straw, and the dying prince, who needs them just as much, upon the softness that pillows royalty. Kings are not above it, and beggars not be-

low it. It reaches expiring infancy and expiring age. It is offered with perfect freeness to the sinner at the first moment when felt truth, and the Holy Spirit accompanying it, causes him to realize that he needs it; and it is offered with the same freeness to him when years have blanched his locks, and, the Holy Ghost not yet having forsaken him, he sometimes painfully feels that such an old man ought to get ready to die. Rebellion and hardihood, even that sin of awfulness which many of you here commit when you grieve the Spirit of God, when, troubled and convicted, you will not pray, and will not repent, and will not turn to the love of Christ, even that sin does not limit its application and offer. That sin, indeed, is fast preparing many of your hearts to be proof against it, *hard as the nether mill-stone;* but even now, after so many sins, after so many slighted invitations and warnings, after so many resisted divine influences, the love of Christ is not denied to you. No sinner here goes down to hell but he goes there spurning the Prince of Life, and breaking loose from all the *cords of love* that infinite benevolence could entwine around him.

5. The love of Christ lasts to its objects through all their vicissitudes. If it is once accepted by a sinner, in sincerity and truth, it will never forsake him. Two causes forbid it. One is, that such an acceptance of Christ by faith has wrought an experience in his heart which he can never forget. If he has ever known what it was to rest his immortal soul on the Rock of Ages, to be *reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, to love God and be forgiven, to stand out on the borders of this perishable world, and know that Jesus and

his love are what he wants, and all he wants, as the ashes of the universe are under his feet—such an experience of faith and love and hope will leave influences in his heart that can never be utterly destroyed. You might as soon think to convince a man by putting out his eyes that it is not good for him to see, and make him willing to abide in his dreadful midnight. A soul that has once *known the love of Christ*, just as long as it retains the consciousness of its own identity, and just as surely, will retain the deep-seated consciousness that Christ is what it needs and the spontaneous and supreme desire to choose him for its portion. The other cause is, that the faithfulness of a covenant God shall stand. Grace originated with the Saviour. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* Christ did not find in the sinner any holiness to induce his love for him; and he will not find in him, after he has chosen him, any unworthiness and sin sufficient to induce him to withdraw it. He enters into covenant with the soul. He promises *the sure mercies of David.* His love lasts through all the sinner's vicissitudes.

6. Jesus Christ's love is great beyond all conception. When St. Paul undertook to express the idea of its magnitude, he coined a new phrase in human language—*to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.* It was this love which caused the most wonderful thing which the Deity ever performed. It brought the Son of God to that end which you are to memorialize to-day. And Christ's love was not exhausted when he had died on the Cross. If it brought him into the world, it took him out of it. If it brought him down from the Throne to the tomb, it took him from Mount Olivet to glory. *I go to prepare a place for you.* The business of Jesus Christ

now is, to execute the office of his priesthood. He commenced his intercession in that sacramental prayer recorded by St. John, and he continues it now within the veil. *I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.* He does come. *Ascended up above all heavens* as he is, he bends from that height of greatness to this miserable world. He condescends to sinners and worms of the dust. He is *touched with a feeling of our infirmities.* He comes here to pity and save the polluted and immortal spirit, to pour the balm of comfort over its woes, to secure it from the perils of its enemies, and conduct it through the gates of death up to the regions of immortality. And in that prepared heaven the love of Jesus will still be amazingly great. His people will be owned before *the Father and the holy angels.* They will *walk with Christ in white*, amid the unutterable bliss and glories of the *City of God.*

7. This love of Jesus is unchangeable. *To the end*, says our text. *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever*, says St. Paul. The promise stands good to every one of his people. Not a soul is forgotten. Never a sinner took up his journey of pilgrimage after Christ toward the new Jerusalem, but, amid all his dangers, distresses, and fears, the unchangeable love of Jesus administered consolations to him, neither *few nor small.* If you are persuaded of his love when you behold him taking the cup of wrath out of the Father's hand, standing, to silence the thunders of heaven with his blood, you may know that the same love which brought him to this is just as intense now as it was then. He loves sinners now when he is in glory just as tenderly as he loved them when on earth his lips were vocal with the promises, or, on the Cross, *his soul was made an offering for sin.*

8. Christ's love to his people will be eternal, and more and more unfold its excellencies. Notwithstanding all the benefits he confers on them in this life, and all the blessedness their hearts here experience in his love, they have no adequate measure for what he is going to do. They never died. They never came back from the putrefaction and darkness of the cold, damp vaults of death, amid the glories of the resurrection. They never took flight on the wings of immortality to *meet the Lord in the air.* They never cleaved their way up to the throne of heaven, and stood before God in robes *washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.* But they will. Christ's love has all this in store for them. It is eternal. He does not forsake them in death. Love, the love of Christ, puts underneath them the *everlasting arms.* It forms a part of almost every believer's experience, to find the love of Jesus more and more wonderful as it goes along with him, and soothes and sustains him as new trials and hardships are encountered. He finds this love of Jesus does for him more than he ever expected. And so it is going to be forever. If the penitent sinner found the love of Christ different from what he expected when he first fell at his feet; if the tried believer has found it an unexpected sufficiency as one comfort after another failed, and as he has passed through trials which he never expected to bear, death, the grave, eternity, are not going to change this economy. The love of Christ has new wonders in store for us. We shall meet them at every step. Christ will not forsake his people in death. If, at THIS END of the dark valley, their fainting heart and quivering lips cannot utter it, they shall utter it on the ears of angels, at the other end, *Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!* as

they take their flight towards glory on the breath of this exultation.

Christ's love will not leave his people in the grave. The morn of the resurrection shall shine on them. It shall disclose them as they return from the sepulchre, *spiritual bodies*, *raised in incorruption*, and made *like unto Christ's own glorious body.*

Christ's love will not leave his people when *the heavens are on fire.* Their bodies, already gathered out of their graves and reëntered by their happy souls, come from the bosom of God to claim them, in that dreadful day of the *perdition of ungodly men*, they will rise above the ashes of a burnt world, on wings of love and immortality, to *meet Christ in the air.*

Christ's love will not fail his people at the tribunal of the final judgment. He will confess them, and claim them *before the Father and the holy* angels; and if the idea of *a cup of cold water* that he mentions astonishes us now, what infinite rapture will it pour over the redeemed spirit then, to look away to an eternal heaven of infinite perfection and glory, as the gracious reward of the poor service which he strove to render Christ here, while, in tears and sorrow, he aimed *to sow to the Spirit.* Then the people of Christ shall cleave their way up to the final *City of God.* They shall enter upon their inheritance. They shall see God and be *like him.* They shall love God, and God will love them. Standing on the hills of the heavenly Jerusalem, the trophies of the love of Jesus, clothed in the splendors of immortality, they shall know,—it shall be their high privilege to sing that anthem of redemption, *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*, while the ages of eternity roll on.

Such is the love of Christ. It is a wonderful love, and ought most sensibly to affect us. You are to memorialize it to-day. I know not what to say to you. I feel pained and ashamed and unfit to stand here, I confess, when I can affect you no more with such an infinite theme. My dear friends, take up this matter for your own souls. I know some of you can find ideas to affect you. Some of you have other friends in heaven beside Jesus. They love him; they are infinitely affected by his dying compassion. If they could return to you to-day, if our departed brethren and sisters and elders could come down to us, our sainted fathers and mothers, what words they would utter about heaven and the love which took them there! Try to speak to yourselves as they would speak to you. Try to love Jesus as they love him. And come, to-day, to be duly sensible of that love of Christ which you memorialize, and which you expect will soon make you companions of your friends in heaven.

XVIII.

We love him because he first loved us.

"We love him because he first loved us."—1 John iv. 19.

IF any man on this side the valley of death ever needs to know God rightly, and himself rightly, surely a believer needs to do so on a day like this. This is the day of the Lord's covenant. It is the day of the believer's solemn ratification of it for his own soul. The bread is going to be broken. The wine is going to be poured out. The lips that have been opened in prayer are going to be opened to receive the sacred emblems; and hearts, hearts called off from the world and sin to act in these high solemnities, are going to open to meet God, and transact business with him for the world to come. *Who is sufficient for these things?* May the Holy Ghost aid us! We need to know justly the God with whom we are covenanting,—and the hearts on whose covenant emotions God will assuredly either smile or frown. Solemn, awful ideas! You will go from his Table this afternoon under the smiles of the eternal God, who has bowed the heavens and come down to your communion-seat, who has entered your communion-heart, who has heard your communion-prayers, and will remember till the day of judgment your

communion-love; or you will go from it (whether you are sensible of it or not) under the indignant frown of the Holy One— *Who hath required this at your hands?* —because your heart in this solemn ordinance hath been so far from its due frame that its emotions have virtually declared, *The Table of the Lord is contemptible!* To that smile or that frown you look forward this morning. You cannot avoid it.

Sometimes when hope trembles, when faith is weak, when doubts and fears and darkness trouble the bosom of the contemplating communicant, and his trembling lips whisper, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily* —then he feels a disposition creeping over his heart to abstain from the ordinance, lest he fall under the frown he fears. But if he yield to that disposition, his yielding will do him no good. Certainly will God frown upon him if he turn away. He requires him to commune. Abstaining cannot relieve him from his perplexity. God will not be his God if he will not trust in him and obey him. Jesus Christ will not *come in and sup with him*, if he closes the door of his heart against him. All he can do is to flee to the divine mercy, and hide himself in the divine covenant. He needs to know God and know himself.

To aid him in this necessity the words of the text are most appropriate— *We love him because he first loved us.* The believer ought to be able to speak thus.

The text proclaims a fact respecting God. *He first loved us.*

It proclaims a fact respecting believers, *We love him.*

It affirms that this fact respecting believers grows out of this fact respecting God. *We love him* BECAUSE *he first loved us.*

These are the three ideas of the text. Our consideration of them will first take them apart; and then, according to the mode of the text, put them together.

We need to know God rightly. *He first loved us.*

The expressions which precede the text show what was in the mind of the divine writer when he uttered these words. He was thinking of Jesus Christ. He had been trained among the disciples. He had been with his Master on the mountain, on the lake of storms, amid the sick, among comforted hearts that leaped for joy as Christ raised their loved ones to life, on the mount of glory when Moses and Elias came down, and Christ talked to them of *the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;* and from the garden of Gethsemane he had gone to the closing scene of the crucifixion. And now, when his faith was confirmed by more light, and his love mellowed by a thousand experiences, and he looks back through the mist of years, he remembers the crucifixion as well as ever. He knows what it means. He knows it is the bright lesson of the love of God. *In this* (says he, in the ninth verse) *was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.* And he knows the grand purpose for which Christ came. He knows that that purpose, and the bloody mode of its accomplishment, are the height of all possible demonstration of the love of God. Consequently (in the tenth verse) he says, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* He knows that Jesus Christ came for no mere purposes of instruction: a prophet or an apostle could have given that. He knows that he came for no

mere example: a holy man could have given that He knows that Jesus Christ came to do what no mere creature could do,—to grapple with the justice of God, to bear the penalty of the Law, and by his life-blood to rescue the guilty (who loved him not) from the deserved and coming doom of the eternal anger of God. Between that anger and the sinner he stood. He bore its strokes. He bared his head, and the blow prepared for the sinner fell on him. Much as God loved him, so he treated him. So he treated him, *for us*. St. John remembers it, and hence he says again, *We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the* world.

This is what St. John was thinking of when he uttered the text. This is the manifestation of the love of God. We need not now say a single word more to unfold to you the love of God, by any idea of the nature of the gift. He gave his Son; and your meditations *have* been where your heart *will* be this afternoon, on this wonderful bestowment.

But it may serve to aid your correct appreciation of this love of God if we explain it in respect to its objects. God had no complacency in them. He could not have. They were sinners. They had broken his law, and all the evil of their subsequent experiences in sin had only wedded them more and more to its perpetration. You will search the Bible in vain for the idea, or any resemblance to the idea, that God *loved us* because of any excellence in our character. No such idea is there. Bible theology constantly maintains that human nature is fallen and vile. With equal clearness does it affirm man's guilt as he deserves punishment, and man's sinfulness as he loves the very sin which renders him guilty.

In his natural heart there is not a single quality to commend him to the love of God. It would be very different with him if he had perpetrated his offence only in some moment of weakness, or by some sudden surprise, and, after finding out his evil, mourned over it and turned from its continued perpetration. It would be very different with him if he had only fallen into sin, and were thus liable to punishment justly, and, after experience in it, were unwilling to continue in it any longer. But it is not so with him. He has the double evil of bad deservings and bad disposition. He has first flung away his felicity, and then hated it.

Such is man's natural condition, and such his character. He is depraved—an alien and an enemy of God. The love, therefore, which God bore to him was not the love of complacency, but of good-will; it was not the love of delight and approval, but the love of kindness. There was nothing in man, in all his moral aspects and deservings, which God could delight in. He was a guilty and vile sinner. He had departed from God, and did not wish to return. All his emotions were unholy, and therefore there was nothing in him to draw forth the complacency of the divine mind; or constitute any consideration to prompt to God's redeeming achievements.

The doctrine of human depravity has been called gloomy and dreadful. Aside from the gospel, so it is. And unbelievers under the gospel (simply because they were unbelievers) have recoiled from its conviction, from coming down to the humble place it assigns to them. But *with* the gospel, if our hearts will only believe it, this truth about our entire depravity has a most glorious bearing. It helps to explain to us the love of God. He did not love us because we deserved it. He did not

love us because he saw among the defilements of our character some lingering traces of holiness, some spots of light and promise, which won him to our relief. If he had, and under that observation had moved towards us on the high-road of an opened reconciliation, and had offered us pardon, and had called out into reclaiming exercise the traces of good he had discovered in our hearts, we will not say such a movement would not have been admirable, but we will say that it would have been immeasurably beneath the majesty and the adorable wonders of the movement we contemplate.

God loved us in our depravity, in our entire depravity. When we see this, the glorious truth brings us up to a vast elevation above the grovelling of such sentiments as attribute the love of the Deity *for* us to his discernment of some excellencies *in* us which deserved his love. He made no such discovery. He loved us without it. He loved like a God. It is a very different thing to overlook imperfections there may be in character, and, notwithstanding all the repulsiveness there may be in them, to love still, on account of some discovered excellencies, some lingering traits which may be nursed into excellencies, from what it is to love in the very face of deformity, pollution, and vileness! In this latter way, God loved us—not from the lingering attractions of our character, but from the adorable grace of his own kindness. We, believing in the entire depravity of man, have this high idea of God. We carry out his love to a different thing, to an altogether different sphere of action. We make his love itself a different thing—heaven-high above all the conceptions of it which a man can ever entertain who believes that God loved us because he saw something in us to be loved.

It is on the foundation of this love of God, on this fixed and settled conviction of its unequalled nature, that believers love him. And this is what is intended in those numerous passages of scripture which link together a Christian love and a Christian faith. *Faith worketh by love.* The meaning is, that faith in the heart originates love in the heart; that when a sinner has become fully sensible of his undone condition and depraved character, and has been led to *believe* in God as exercising still a strength and sincerity of love to him on the mere principle of his own inexpressible and formerly unapprehended and unbelieved goodness, then this faith, this new state of heart (a state impossible to an unbeliever in man's depravity) *worketh* out in the heart those affections of gratitude, of admiration, of delight and confidence, which, blending in mysterious union, constitute what we call *love.* It is not easy to analyze and explain the passion. The heart understands it better than the intellect. Remark, only, love has admiration in it; and admiration rises to an adoring emotion when God is seen working out his way of relief down to our miserable abode, over all the obstacles of a combined guiltiness and enmity to him. Love has gratitude in it,—if no other, at least the gratitude of some generous emotion for a believed kindly regard;—and gratitude rises to a new height when faith sees God doing the most wonderful of all his works in the facts of Bethlehem and Calvary and Arimathea, to save sinners from hell, and lift them to heaven. Love has something of delight in it, delight in its object; and over the whole character of God there gathers a new and glorious aspect of loveliness and majesty and beauty, when faith beholds him giving exaltation to his dignity by pitying the

poorest sinner that ever groaned and died. Love has confidence in it; and confidence, after finding no spot of repose, after being driven and tossed about, driven from one tract of sinful humanity to another, from one work of humanity to another, driven from attribute to attribute of God, finds a glorious spot of repose when faith sees God himself holding out signals of relief, and approaching the sinner on the very confines of hell. The signals wave over the plains of Bethlehem, are planted on the hill of the crucifixion, and are seen from Mount Olivet in that bright track by which the Saviour ascended to his God, now our God, and his Father, now our Father.

And so we might go on. If there are (and we could ascertain and understand them) any other elements of love, we should perceive faith to be the very principle to call them into existence. You must *believe* in God if you would love him. You must believe in him as he reveals himself in the way of propitiation for our sins. We address to you the exhortation of St. Jude, *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy* FAITH, *praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the* LOVE *of God.* You will be sure to love him if you believe in him rightly. Try to believe as a communicant ought to do; believe in a love and a grace which you never deserved, but which the infinite God has demonstrated to you in the blood of his Son.

We feel entirely assured that the love of a Christian toward God does and must originate in his faith in Jesus Christ. We have not a particle of doubt that the combining of these two things which we have been putting together, in the believing mind of the Christian, originates and cultures his affection of love to God One

of the things is, God's gracious, undeserved love toward him, manifested (according to the chapter before us) in the gift of his Son; the other is, his own entire guiltiness and enmity toward God.

This guiltiness and enmity he discovers in the processes of his conviction, when, more and more, he finds out the true state of his heart. This love of God toward him he finds, and is constrained to resort to, when the Holy Spirit has enlightened his darkened understanding, convinced him of his sin and misery, has renewed his will unto righteousness, and persuaded and enabled him to embrace Jesus Christ, offered by God in grace and love, to save him.

These are the two things most difficult to persuade sinners fully and firmly to believe. They resist and reject them both. There is a pride about their character, or an ignorance in their understanding, or an obstinacy, or a spirit of self-righteousness, or some such thing, or all of these, which will not admit the conviction that they are really the enemies of God, and under the condemnation of his law. And connected with this, and sustained by this, is an unbelief in the love and kindness and pity which God actually bears toward them. God *has* a love; he has it, and positively exercises it towards them, and has demonstrated it as he has demonstrated nothing else in the universe: he has a positive love for them, which they will not believe, which they hinder themselves from believing, and shut away from their heart by the mere processes of a self-justifying disposition. They will not believe that man is dead in *trespasses and sins*, wholly lost to righteousness in the sight of God, and under the curse; and therefore it is utterly impossible that they should have any just conception

of that love of God which offers to save, or should render the respect and homage which belong to it. God is better, infinitely better than they think him to be, or ever can or will think him to be till they fully believe in man's depraved guiltiness and enmity, and see the footsteps of God bending towards him with the demonstrations of an infinite good-will.

And if the processes of sanctifying grace are prosperously carried on in believers' hearts, they will owe that prosperity, under the Holy Spirit, to the influence of their low ideas of themselves on the one hand, and their high ideas of the redeeming love of God on the other. As sanctification progresses, these two classes of ideas will become more and more clear. They will aid one another; they will be blended into one another. Humility and repentance will become more deep, not only from discoveries of indwelling sin, but also from discoveries of that abounding grace of God which can freely pardon an unworthy creature, and sanctify a wayward and obstinate one. Conscience will become more tender, both when the discovery is made how *easily sin besets*, and that other discovery, how offensive and opposed it is to the tender regard of God for his people. The service of God will become more pure, more willing and delightful, because the believer will begin to see, on the one hand, more and more of the sin there is in serving himself and the world, and, on the other, the infinite condescension of that love of God which accepts and honors and prizes even his little services sincerely rendered. In all the more personal and experimental religion of the believer his thoughts will be passing and repassing from his own unworthiness to God's grace—from God's grace back to his own unworthiness: sin in

him, and love in God; guilt in him, and grace that saves him, will be ideas constantly blended. Thus, from all that he learns of himself, and all that he learns of God, he will say from the heart, *We love him because he first loved us.*

But there is one kind of argumentation (and it is especially apt to come into exercise on a day like this)—an argumentation sometimes of a tender conscience, sometimes of a fearful heart, and sometimes too of an unbelieving one—which tends to put entirely away all the influences which we have tried to find in this verse. Let us explain. When the love of God toward us is pleaded as a ground of confidence in him, and employed for the purpose of calling forth our love to him, there is a state of heart which recoils from such a requiting affection, and thinks it must recoil. One says, If I love God solely because he loved me, I fear there is no sincerity of holiness in my love to him, but merely the modification of a sinful and selfish affection.—The pride of an unbelieving heart, as we said, the fear of a tremulous one, and a tender conscience also, may give rise to this notion. We speak more especially to the trouble of conscience and fear. My brethren, did you ever remark that Satan strives to keep Christians from comfort by precisely the same suggestions which he employs to keep unbelievers from conversion? The idea before us is an example. The proud unbeliever, too proud to depend on grace, and too haughty to be affected by its winning offers, pretends, and perhaps believes, that he, if *he* ever loves God, will love him on some higher principle than because God has loved him and provided salvation for him. The tremulous believer, fearful of defilement in a conscience which has so often

tormented him, checks his rising emotions of love to God because he is afraid they are unspiritual and unacceptable—loving God *because he first loved* him. Note the lesson we laid down to you: that Satan endeavors to hinder the exercises of faith in precisely the same mode in which he endeavors to hinder its origin. *Here* is a believer hunting his heart to find something to commend its exercises to God. *There* is an unbeliever employed in the same sad manner. Neither of them (now when the believer's speculation has ice-bound his heart) consents to be drawn to God by the cords of love which God's own fingers have woven. Both have now an imperfect notion of human insufficiency on the one hand, and divine love on the other. Our love is not our Saviour. God will not accept it as such. Sad food for the Christian when he strives to comfort and nourish himself on his own exercises, instead of feeding gratefully on the *bread of life which came down from heaven.*

But beyond this. The argumentation is a falsehood. It is like all the suggestions of the devil. Remember the four following ideas:

1. The redeeming love of God toward sinners is a bright and blessed unfolding of God himself. It discloses his character. It opens up an avenue to the knowledge of that perfect Being, rendered to whom the best love is the highest holiness. What if he is loved *because he first loved us?* He is loved, after all, for what he is—for the glorious excellence his redeeming work has unfolded. He is loved as faith loves him, a faith which does not see God like unbelief, a cold abstraction, a soulless system; but sees him in his true nature, and loves him on the just principle, *i. e.*, because *God is love.*

2. Discriminate further. If we do love God *because he first loved us*, our affection is not to be greatly distrusted as partaking of the taint of an unholy selfishness. Selfishness — what does it do? It agrees with man's natural inclinations. It fosters them. It is not apt to restrain them, if it can avoid it. If it does so, it does it from an unworthy principle. It has few crosses. There are no self-denials among its lessons. But this love to God *because he first loved us*—I appeal to the whole earthly history of holiness whether it hath not been the efficient principle to make man able and willing to take up the heaviest crosses that human nature ever lifted. It hath made man an exile, and clothed him in *sheep-skins and goat-skins*. It hath made men houseless, and given them a willing and joyful residence *in dens and caves of the earth*. It hath made man friendless; and his heart sank not when, cut off from the society of men, he found society in God. And I appeal to all the loving hearts before me, whether, when they love God most for his redeeming love to them, that is not the very time when they are most ready to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world*. This love, therefore, in all its influences, is heaven-wide apart from all the influences of a mere selfishness.

3. Selfishness looks on earth as its harvest-field. It seldom glances beyond it. Here it lives, and here it would live always. Here it clings. Here it studies. It navigates oceans, explores mines, invents pleasures for the present time. It practises its treachery everywhere, for no other purpose than to throw over the world a charm of loveliness, and charm God and eternity away from the heart. Exactly the converse of all this are

the actings of this love to God *because he first loved us.* This love is the only efficient sentiment which ever makes a man work well for eternity. Treasured there, in that *house not made with hands*, are its objects. It hopes to see God face to face, and love him better, and be loved by him, when fire hath kindled upon all that selfishness delights in. They are vastly unlike.

4. Selfishness has a name that indicates its nature with as much accuracy as godliness indicates the nature of the virtue it designates. Selfishness would make a man happy *in* self, if it could. It aims at this, at this only. It has pride. It has ambition. Often it has avarice and dishonesty. Envy and revenge are its frequent attendants. *Itself* is the centre, and all else revolves around it in subordination to this one law.

But when we love God *because he first loved us*, where is the heart? It is on God. Not on self, but on God. God then becomes the heart's portion; and if this love is exercised, under all circumstances you may mark the fact. You may hear the believer in his want exclaiming, *As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.* You may hear the believer in his abandonment exclaiming, *O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat: I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No, but he would put strength in me . . . I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on my right hand that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the*

way I take, and when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold. Not a sentence of this can be uttered by selfishness.—You may hear the believer, when he hath looked over all the world, and heard the inquiries of the selfish worldlings that throng it, retiring to his closet and his God, exclaiming, *There be many that say, Who will show us any good?* and then, falling on his knees, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.* —And finally, you may hear him, in those moments of enlargement when his mind sweeps over all worlds, and comprehends all the necessities of his existence, and faith and hope and love move out beyond the resurrection of the dead, *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*

The argument is done. We need have no fear of the affection when we love God *because he first loved us.* Selfishness never operates on these principles; and therefore unbelievers, this afternoon, will not enter into the covenant of Love, of God, and of Eternity.

But though unbelievers behold it not, the matter before us is full of preciousness. The communion we celebrate is the communion of the love of God to sinners. God *loved us.*

We hope, communicants, you will come to his Table under the full weight of the idea that you owe all your hopes to the free love of God. There was nothing in you to commend you to him. You were guilty and vile. The moral government under which you were placed had been outraged, and you can remember well what unholiness you have found in your heart—what worldliness, what vanity, what pride, what evil thoughts! These remembrances may well humble you. They ought to do so. But they ought not to drive you to

despair. You ought to take the matter we have tried to unfold to your faith. Be not afraid of it. Say to yourself, "I see how it is. I see God loved me when there was nothing in me to be loved. Me—miserable victim of sin—God loved! I deserved nothing, but grace saved me. I will cleave to this God. *I will love him because he first loved me.*"

You will have moments when the justice and holiness of God will perhaps terrify you. You will conceive him as awful in his majesty, your final judge, on a tribunal before whose thunders you must soon stand. Quickened recollection will bring enormities of sin to your mind, and that coming judgment *according to the deeds done in the body* will be an idea which will seem to make hell open under your feet, and devils wait to receive a guilty victim to their torments. Remember our subject. Remember that the majesty of God's love for sinners does not fall beneath the majesty of God's love of justice; and if he does love his government, law, and honor, just as truly he loves your soul. And no matter what guilt there may be in you, no matter what terrors come from a broken law, no matter what flames kindle, or what devils wait, if you will but believe in God's good-will to you, and trust in the Christ he offers you, and *love him because he first loved you*, you shall stand safe before the coming tribunal, and its thunders will fall disarmed and harmless at your feet.

You may have moments when the service of God to which you are called will seem intolerable. You must bear insult, and not resent it in anger—you must suffer pain, and not be impatient—you must bear crosses. And you, a frail mortal, a sinner constantly going astray, a broken reed, a worm,—what are you that you should stand in this service, to the required glorifying of your

God *in body and spirit: Fear not, thou worm Jacob!* The love that redeemed thee will not forget thee. It will strengthen thee to fight thy battles, and crown thee when the victory is won!

Thus in every respect the love of God toward you should be the ready and blessed argument to kindle yours toward him. Thou sinner, thou miserable victim of sin and death and hell, the love of God has abounded toward thee. It has reached thy sin—it has prepared thy victory for thee over death—it has covered up thy hell! To do all this it hath taken the Son of God out of heaven; it hath brought him down to the miseries and ignominy of earth. It hath nailed him to the tree. It hath locked him in the icy arms of death, and given his mangled body to the tomb!

With what sentiments will you memorialize all this this afternoon? In the name of the love of God, in the name of the blood of scourging and of the spear, in the name of the tomb of Jesus, I conjure you, lift the Cup, saying, *I love him because he first loved me.*

We trust you will say this, and not drink it in vain. We hope the windows of heaven will be opened, and a benediction be poured out on the communing assembly! We trust your faith will enter into the fulness of God's love to you, and your hearts render back to him love for love, and tenderness for tenderness. So commune, a redeemed, forgiven, and happy child; and, communing thus in love, may you remember this covenant occasion with pleasure on the bed of death,—and with bliss and gratitude beyond it, when your voice shall join the alleluiah, *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

XIX.

Necessity of the Sufferings of Christ.

"In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."—HEBREWS, ii. 17.

THE great and leading idea to which we desire to confine your attention in this sermon is taken from the first clause of this verse. It is here affirmed that there was a kind of *necessity* that Jesus Christ should take the course he did. *It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.*

Fitly to introduce the force of this idea, three things seem to be desirable. 1. The connection of the text. 2. An explanation of its clauses. 3. A general statement of the doctrines of redemption; to which subject the idea we propose to elucidate belongs.

Let us attend to these, and then penetrate the heart of the subject.

1. The connexion of the text. In the preceding chapter the inspired writer demonstrates in his own way (and no man could choose a better way)—he demonstrates the Deity of Jesus Christ. In this chapter he commences a personal application of the doctrine; that is, the greater and more solemn obligation of accepting

him as a Saviour, since he is *God*, whose *throne is for ever and ever.* And he goes on to enforce faith in Jesus Christ by three remarkable considerations.

First: That the strict justice of God, which, under the ancient dispensation, inflicted *just recompense of reward* upon disobedience, cannot be expected, surely, (when Jesus Christ himself has come into the world,) to be less strict upon those who *neglect so great salvation.*

The *second* consideration to enforce faith is the testimony given of God—*signs, and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.*

The *third* consideration is, that this coming and crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the positive realization of that which God had foretold and promised; and the light of which was really the only light that beamed anywhere on the fields of the ancient dispensation. With this view, the inspired apostle quotes from the eighth Psalm, *Thou madest him a little lower than the angels*, or, (as it might be translated,) *for a little while inferior to the angels. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.* And he goes on to apply this to Jesus Christ, especially to Jesus Christ as a sufferer; and, by a common-sense argument, shows that it can have no other application. He appeals to facts; he wants us to use our eyes; *for*, says he, *we see not yet all things put under* HIM, that is, man. The eighth Psalm has had no such verification. How then has it been verified? What do we see? *We see Jesus, who, in fact, was made for a little while inferior to the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.* Christ's sufferings and death, with the apostle, appear to be everything: all else revolves around this centre: and then, to connect this exaltation of Christ with the

humilation of his crucifixion, where it belongs, the divine writer links the parts of his argument together.

He has said that *for the suffering of death—death tasted for every man*—Jesus Christ is *crowned with glory and honor.* He takes up this idea and carries it back into the now illuminated wilderness of the ancient promises. *It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* His death fits him to be a perfect Redeemer. He came down to the nature and the place of men. *He is not ashamed to call them his brethren.*

This is one link in the chain of argument; and the apostle makes it draw after it the whole burden of the ancient economy, and all the grace of the ancient prophecies and promises; for he immediately quotes from the twenty-second Psalm, which commences with the Saviour's exclamation on the Cross, *My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!* in which Psalm Christ calls his redeemed ones his *brethren;* and then the eighth of Isaiah is quoted by the apostle, *Behold! I and the children which God hath given me!* Fit exclamation for Jesus Christ to make over the communion-table! Thus, by carrying back the light of the Christian dispensation amid all the dimness and darkness of the ancient dispensation, and finding in the facts of the crucifixion an entire realization of what God had promised from the beginning, and what patriarchs and seers and prophets had rejoiced in, the author enforces faith in Christ crucified by inducing the necessity of abandoning the Old Testament, or else taking in the New. One is thus *shut up unto the faith.* He is argumentatively bound to be a Christian or be an infidel; to be a Christian, or *not* be a Jew.

These three considerations—the danger of neglecting *so great salvation*, the testimony which enforces its acceptance, and the fact that in a crucified Christ is found the realization of all that God foretold and promised—constitute the groundwork of the author to persuade sinners to take Jesus Christ in his Deity and in his atonement. The apostle links these two things together. And so do human hearts; and no creed that we have ever yet seen or heard of, written by the pen of mortal, ever took in the one and put out the other. The Deity and the atonement of Christ must and do stand or fall together.

This is the connexion of the text. It comes in just where the author was enforcing faith in the sacrifice of the Son of God.

2. We explain its clauses.

In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren. Men, redeemed sinners, are his brethren. He became like them in every essential thing, so far as there was any possibility of it without sin. This was needful for his redeeming work. He became a man. He became a *man of sorrows.* He was subject to every human infirmity and want and grief, so far as these can exist in a sinless being. He took man's place under the law, and obeyed it. He took man's place before the penalty, and satisfied it. He was tempted of the devil. He feared, and prayed, and hungered, and wept, and died, and was buried. And friends mourned for him, and enemies exulted over his fate, when his mangled body went down to the only earthly spot where it ever rested in peace,—the borrowed sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea.

All this was needful to his redeeming mission. *That*

he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God; to become such was the reason for his being *made like unto his brethren.* There are no priests under the Christian dispensation. Jesus Christ is the only priest in the universe. And even he is not now a priest to offer a sacrifice, but only to plead in heaven the one sacrifice offered up on his Cross, *once for all*, as the scriptures affirm. Made as he was, and suffering as he did, he is prepared to be merciful. He was tempted, and he knows how to succor the tempted. He was tried, and he can sympathize with those in the furnace. The Father was faithful unto *him*, and *he* was faithful unto death; and having been so, every follower has his life-blood testimony to look upon, and know that he will be faithful to him whenever he buffets the billows, whether billows of life or death.

His suffering was needful to his mediatorial work, *In all things pertaining to God.* To be a mediator and make peace between God and sinners; to satisfy for their sins; to answer the law; to be the *Lord our righteousness;* and, as the end of all priesthood, to present us before the throne of God the Father, the price and purchase of his own blood,—Jesus Christ was fully prepared by his incarnation and crucifixion. *To make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* Jesus Christ needed a body, and he had it; he needed a "reasonable soul," and he had it, and it was often wrung with bitterness and anguish; he needed to stand under the law, and he stood there, and it spent its thunders upon his bared head; he needed to die, and the sacrifice was ready; he went willingly up to Jerusalem, and the prayer of the garden nerved his holy soul for the wrath of the Cross. On that bloody tree it was *finished;* he

made reconciliation for the sins of the people, and guilt, and God, and law, and hell, and heaven, can ask no more!

This is the explanation of the clauses of the text. They all agree with the connexion, to invite sinners to faith in the sacrifice of the Son of God.

3. The last preliminary to the idea we propose more especially to elucidate, is a general statement of the doctrines of redemption, to which subject that idea belongs. We state them thus:

Man is a fallen sinner. By transgression of the holy law of God, he has incurred its penalty, everlasting punishment; he has departed from God his Maker; is justly liable to his final anger; and is utterly unable to do anything or suffer anything which can avail to expiate his sin, and reconcile his offended God.

To make such an expiation for man's sin, and reconcile God toward sinners, God the Father did, out of his own free love, give up his own Son to humiliation and death, consenting to take his sufferings and death in the place of the punishment of sinners, and to free them forever from deserved condemnation, and receive them forever into his covenant love and favor, on account of what Jesus Christ should do.

Jesus Christ did take willingly the law-place of sinners, and became their surety, and stood in their stead under the penal sanction of God's holy moral law, and did give his life a ransom for sinners' souls.

The ransom has been accepted, and the open testimony of its acceptance is registered in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and his ascension into heaven; and therefore we know now that God can be just, and yet forgive and love and save sinners.

God, then, does forgive and save sinners on precisely this ground, justifying them freely by his grace, through the redemption of his Son—the humiliation, and especially the atoning death of Christ, and not the sinner's own deserving or worth, being the meritorious ground on which salvation for sinners all proceeds.

These facts, this way of salvation, have been laid down in the gospel, and this gospel-message constitutes the sure and only warrant for a sinner's expecting salvation unto eternal life.

To attain this salvation, it is indispensably necessary that he should believe in it, and close with it, taking God at his own word, and trusting the mediation of Jesus Christ to remove the obstacles to his salvation which sin has flung across his pathway into heaven.

This faith in Jesus Christ (and its kindred actions) is at once the sinner's duty and his gracious privilege the very moment he hears the gospel: and there is no other way of salvation known, and never can be; so that if he rejects and refuses this, he must die in his sins, and perish for ever.

But however guilty he may be, it now must be not his guilt, but his unbelief, which can ruin him; and if he will believe in Christ, repenting of his sins and coming unto God as he invites him, he shall be forgiven, accepted of God, and finally made like him, and happy with him for ever in heaven, *for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

This is a general statement of the doctrines among which the idea of the text lies.

And we would remark, that the sufferings and atonement of Jesus Christ are necessary to this system in general, and to every item contained in it. Count the

sufferings of Christ as only incidental, and not *the* essential thing in his work, and this whole system is utterly broken into pieces, and every item of it becomes marred, and as unmeaning as an idiot's dream.

And this introduces us to the idea which we propose to elucidate. Leaving the exemplification and doctrines of the Bible, we turn to the properties of human nature.

Our idea is, that for the purposes of man's salvation, there was a necessity that Jesus Christ should do as he did. *It behooved him to be made* as he was made, and to die as he did die, to *make reconciliation* for sinners.

We do not mean by this that he was under any obligation to this guilty and lost world, so that any sinner could ever utter a word of complaining if Bethlehem and Calvary had never been heard of, or any thing that lies between the cradle and the Cross of the suffering Son of God. But we do mean that precisely this course which Jesus Christ took, especially when he died to *make* this *reconciliation for sins*, was, in the very nature of the case, necessary; if he would, in love and grace, redeem man and reconcile him to God, *it behooved him* to die.

We have four different articles on this point:

I. This, or something like this, is indispensably requisite to the common-sense ideas of the *human mind.*

In this atonement and bloody redemption of the Son of God, we have a new work of the Deity. We allow it is something new and strange—something beyond nature, and beyond all possible inventions of human reason. It is God himself operating in a new way; stepping forth upon that theatre where sin had commenced its mischiefs, where death and devils were let loose to do their work, and where the sufferers, their

victims, employed their own powers willingly in a way to ruin themselves; and upon this same theatre of mischief, it is God, with new wisdom, (to us,) with new power, and with a new exhibition of divine supremacy and sovereignty, grappling with the enemies of man and of himself, and opening a highway for the lost and guilty to return into *their* felicity and *his* favor. There was, in this redeeming transaction, all the singularity which infidels and scoffers have ever attributed to it. They are right, perfectly right, when they affirm that this atoning transaction has no parallel in nature—no analogy in God's creation, or his government of the universe. It has none. It stands alone—a new exhibition of God. And this singularity of the procedure, which *they* make a ground of its rejection, *we* make the very ground of its acceptance. On this point we join issue with them, and we maintain that this, or something like this, (if a sinner is to be forgiven,) is indispensable to the human mind; that, aside from this, no reasonable mind can have any ground to rest upon in the expectancy of pardon.

And the truth which we maintain is, it seems to us, level to everybody's comprehension. It lies just here: there is a moral law; moral and accountable creatures are under the judicial government of God. They are bound to obedience, which men have not rendered. And if the law has no penalty, then it is law no longer; it is only advice; and a moral being may break it or keep it, just as he pleases. And in doing the one or the other, there is neither virtue nor vice. Virtue! what does it mean? Let common-sense answer. It means disposition or conduct conformed to some good rule—a rule which *is* good because it emanates from just au-

thority, and because good is to grow out of its observance. Vice! what does it mean? Common-sense answers: It means disposition or conduct contrary to some good rule—a rule which *is* good because it emanates from just authority, and because evil will result from its violation. Remove the penalty, and the law is gone—virtue is virtue, and vice is vice, no more. No matter whether I love God or hate him, if he has no will in the matter, and if the results of love and hate are the same. No matter whether I love my neighbor or hate him, if God has no authoritative will in the matter, and if the results of my benevolence or malignity are the same. Moral right is conformity to the will of God; and moral wrong is opposition to it. But it is not pretended that God has no moral government. Even infidels (all except atheists) maintain that he has; and in their self-formed theories they have many proud speculations about the administration of government over accountable creatures. Even they will admit that the moral law is supported by sanctions, and that the truth and dignity and justice of God are involved in the maintenance of his authority through the law's sanctions.

Now, let us take one idea more. That idea simply is, the law of God has been broken by man. Nothing more. We want no more for our argument. The law has been violated. Man is a sinner. No matter for the extent of his sin: he is a sinner.

Now, what shall he do? Whither shall he turn himself? If he marches up to the law of God for safety, he is hurled back by its gathering thunders; it knows no mercy. His mind, his common-sense, cannot let him rest there. If he looks to his character, Sinner, sinner, sinner! is the terrific voice uttered from the mind, the

conscience, the heart within him. He is driven off from the field of his character, to find any thing for his mind to rest upon and be satisfied with. Again he ventures up and examines law, government, and God; and again he is hurled off, because he has not obeyed them.

What shall he do? Where can his mind, his common-sense, rest? Tell us, ye proud reasoners, tell us where ye can fix on any thing to satisfy reason! What can you see to demonstrate to you that pardon and salvation can be expected by sinners? I do not wish to rush into eternity like a fool. I want to understand something about a moral matter, connected with which my few years of experience—experience of this mind, this heart, this conscience—tell me so much of my felicity lies. Tell me where I can find any thing to show me, to convince my *mind*, that sin is pardonable, and my soul salvable!

The heavens of God are above us; his earth is around us. But you cannot find, in the one or the other, one single ground of assurance. Such a ground exists nowhere in all the hand-writing of nature. You may say, evil flows from sin, and the evil the sinner himself experiences is the penalty of God's law, and the sinner's whole punishment. But what law of nature, what tree, what rock or star, tells you this is all? How are you certified? Show me the mountain on whose granite the declaration is graven; or lead me to the ocean in whose mighty roar it is echoed, that man suffers here all the penalty of sin. How do you know it? You do not know it. You cannot know it. To say nothing of sin's extent or malignity, to admit simply its existence is enough to show that the mind of a reasonable being, in order to have hope as a sinner, *must* see God himself

doing a new work, and laying a new foundation for hope. Man is an accountable being. He has sinned. He is liable to God's law. And certainly, in order to live reasonably in peace, or die reasonably in hope, he does need to see, somewhere, a proof of salvation for sinners. He does need to see God undertaking for him. In the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ he sees this. And this new and perfectly singular manifestation of God in the work of atonement is the thing, the very thing, which a reasonable mind needs to rest upon. It is singular enough. It stands alone. It is a new exhibition of God, and has no analogy in the universe. And because it is such, without parallel and without analogy, strange and peculiar, it is perceived to be sufficient to meet that evil, SIN, which is without parallel and without analogy also—a strange and peculiar mischief.

The same conclusion will come upon us with additional force, if we consider the *human conscience.*

The moral sense, it is true, is ever connected with a reasonable understanding, but it has its own peculiarities. And as connected, also, with a class of very vivid sensibilities, it needs some ground to rest upon which shall soothe and satisfy them all. And it often goes beyond mind, in its fearfulness and foreboding about sin, feeling that it has good reason to anticipate ills, the dimensions of which no mind can measure. Something is requisite to satisfy a sinner's conscience. He is sensible of moral obligation. He cannot easily convince himself, or others, that his conscience is a mistake, a fancy, a hobgoblin, a dream. He will carry moral judgment with him in all his paths and all his worlds. At times, here, it will slumber, especially when he resists the influences of the Holy Spirit; but some of its

"compunctious visitings" will be occasionally experienced, and alarm, if not from the heart's tenderness, at least from the heart's cowardice, (and we care not which, for argument's sake,) will be a serious trouble to him. Even in sinning, man is often made unhappy by this voice from within. And this conscience will not cease its troublesome visitations to a sinner, till he reaches in his sins the spot where the fumes of the very pit stupefy him, and in *strong delusion he believes a lie.* If, among very stupid and hardened unbelievers, some instances can be pointed out where there was little or no concern of conscience—like Hume, laughing and joking about death and the judgment—it no more proves that conscience does not belong to human nature, than the fiend-like hardihood of a pirate proves that man has not kindly affections. These are alike exceptions; that is, they are instances in which habit has overcome nature; in which sin has wrought its evil, in the one case, to the extent of darkening the understanding and stupefying it towards God, and, in the other, of hardening the heart utterly towards men.

Extinguished sensibility is no proof it never existed; and there is nothing in the unconcern of any infidel to furnish any thing but proof of an extinguished conscience towards God. Its owner will find it again in another world.

In all the ordinary moods of man his conscience is accessible to a little of the truth. He knows that in the inner man there is estrangement from God. He knows that he cannot stand a comparison with God's spiritual law. He knows that selfishness has too much power over him. He knows that he loves the world too well. Every time he climbs the mount of contemplation (as

sometimes he must) and looks off towards the unseen world before him, he knows well that in his spirit and aims he has come short of eternity and the God who inhabits it. And if he will pause in his career of passion and worldliness for a single moment, and recollect his history, he will find in that history many a long space when God has not been cared for, or even thought of; when he lived according to his own will simply, utterly regardless of the arm that held up, and of the high moral destiny to which the finger of God pointed him.

Now, what shall satisfy this conscience, which belongs to human nature? The trial has been made, and is still making. Toilsome rounds of supposed duty have been run. Fearful mortifications have been practised. Costly sacrifices have been offered. *The fruit of the body* has been given for *the sin of the soul.* None of these things reach the spot. They form no good ground to hope on, or die on. They are all human. They are not divine. They come from the compunctions of man, but they do not reach the spirituality of God. They do not reach his majesty. They are very anxious and very agonizing struggles of souls convicted of sin, trying to get hold of something which God will accept and conscience rest upon, when a sinner has offended God. But they fail. And what shall be done? Where shall the soul turn? What shall open before it a door of hope into another world?

There is no place to flee to, except in this new and strange work of an atoning God. God himself must do something which shall wear the signet of his own high authority. He must step forth from behind the curtains of eternity, and in this world of sin must write somewhere the demonstration of a satisfied law and a satisfied

God. If it is only the act and agency of a creature that undertakes for a sinner, how shall the conscience of the sinner be assured it is enough, and that his sins are therefore pardonable? There can be no such assurance. But when the sinner sees Christ Jesus undertaking for him, standing in the sinner's own nature and the sinner's own place, arraigned as his surety, held as his surety, dying as his surety; never giving back till he has met the very last item, and going down into the grave to sanctify and sweeten that last trial-spot of the believer; and when, in the opened portals of the tomb, and in the ascension-track of the Redeemer from Bethany to glory, he sees the evidence of God's pacification; when he hears from God's own mouth the declaration, *The law is magnified . . . He that believeth shall be saved*, in this new and strange work of God he finds some foot hold for conscience to stand upon. It is just this: Christ has become accountable for him; Christ has met the blow prepared for his head; Christ has died for him; Deity has grappled with death and the devil; the tomb has owned a conqueror, and away up by the throne of God bursts the exclamation, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates: even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.*

Conscience can rest here. It cannot accuse beyond Christ; it cannot bring up anything in sin's dreadful evil which lies beyond the reach of this Saviour, *travelling in the greatness of his strength, coming up with dyed garments from Bozrah.... It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.*

III. The necessity of Christ's sufferings will still further appear, if we consider the *evil of sin.* We know part of its evil, but not all. That it is a violation of

God's just government is bad enough, but it is not one act simply. Its worst evil is not to be ascertained by its dimensions, but by its existence. Its nature is the only measure of its own malignity. It has no parallel, no analogy. It opens a fountain of evil. It does its worst mischief in forming a character to perpetuate its perpetration. If there is any truth in the gospel, or rectitude in enlightened reason and conscience, no man can estimate sin's evil till he can use the arithmetic of eternity, and gauge the dimensions of God's final anger. This evil, sin, stands between the sinner and life everlasting. This evil, which has flung the soul off from God—which has filled earth with misery, and built hell —this evil rises up between the sinner's soul and his longed-for eternal felicity.

Now, on what ground can he hope? Where is that joyous demonstration to be found among the miseries of sin, that these miseries are working out their own cure; and that the period is posting on when the term of suffering shall have expired like the term of the convict; and, like him, the statute and the sentence shall let him go free? The convict, under an earthly justice, has hope on some visible ground, if he is not a conviet for life. He marks the sun's motion, the years' roll. He keeps a careful calendar of his imprisonment. Each hour wears away something from the length of his sentence. As years end, as months pass, when the clock strikes, hope sees the end coming nearer.

And it becomes every sinner on earth, who rejects the strange work of God's redemption through the blood of Christ, and rests as a mere natural religionist, to show a parallel. He cannot. He can show nothing like it. He cannot produce anything like an argument that his

days of misery wear, in a single item, upon the period of his liability.

But look further. If the convict in prison offends there, in the time and place of the penalty that is come upon him, the discipline and duty of the spot bring him under another law and another penalty, and he must bear the twofold burden. So this suffering sinner, deep as his woes may be, and bitter as his tears may be, if he offends still, instead of nearing the end of the penalty, (if it had any,) would be pushing it further off. And can any man produce the demonstration of a sinner's innocence during his sufferings? Can it be shown that this man, now suffering as a sinner, sins less than before nature or God's punitive justice arraigned him, and commenced his punishment? Where is the proof? Does he now love God or man more? He is poor. Well, does that make him pious? He is sick. Well, does that make him virtuous or godly? He is starving. But can you starve him into the love of God? Do you find the most punished the most perfect, and the most ragged drunkard now the most innocent man?

There is nothing in sin to work its own cure. It only works its perpetuity. And if there are remedial operations in God's world of nature, and if thunders purify the atmosphere and widely extended breathings of the pestilence exhaust its malignity, you can find nothing like it in God's world of moral spirits; and you can employ no arithmetic of centuries to tell how long a sinner must keep on in his woes before he reaches the end of the sentence, and shall have exhausted the penalty. You do not know when the end is. Nature does not tell you; reason does not tell you; nor does anything else. And you cannot gauge the dimensions of the

anger of God. That anger must be great. He is infinitely benevolent. He infinitely loves souls. Still, he lets them blast all their felicity for both worlds, (if they will not turn unto him,) and go down into that *everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

We ask, then, in view of such an evil as this, what can a reasonable mind trust to atone? Where did God ever work, what did God ever do, to furnish a single argument for expecting the pardon and cure of such an evil? The evil is unparalleled—it has no analogy in the universe. Sin is an exception in the universe; it is a violence; it springs from no law of economy, contrivance or discipline. And how can we hope, how dare we hope, if God himself does *not* make an exception, and, overstepping all other works, come out in that work of bloody atonement where the sinless suffers, and the eternal Son travels in the greatness of his strength. So he has come. He has done a God's work to undo the evil of sin. He has grappled, at once, with its power and its penalty. He has reached the deepest spot of its offence in the angered heart of a just and holy God. He has provided

"That sinners may live since the sinless hath died."

He has, therefore, precisely met our necessity. And we see now that God can do that strange work which he is doing for believers; can pardon them, even while they are still sinning; and by their confidence of faith in his pardoning, gradually draw them off to his love and service. This strange work of atonement meets the strange evils of sin. There was a necessity that Jesus Christ should suffer. Just his sufferings—the sufferings

of a sinless one, of an infinite one—just this prepares him, as an infinite exception in the universe, to tread in recovering power along the dark track of that awful exception, sin, ransoming and redeeming by his blood. Such a Saviour can be trusted.

IV. After all, law and penalty are not their own. Something lies back of them, from which they originated. They are only indications of an unseen disposition and will. If man could find, as he cannot among the common works and visible governing of God, any argument to show that a sinner may escape the announced penalty of law, or exhaust it, that would not be enough to answer a sinner's purpose. A worldly mind may not feel it, but a spiritual mind certainly will, when we affirm that a creature like man wants something more than reconciliation to law, and a hushing up of his quarrel with it; he needs reconciliation to *God*, and the establishment of a filial and affectionate intercourse with him.

Human sentiments follow the unworthy beyond the spot where the penalties of human law leave them. Men are not accustomed to welcome dismissed convicts into their families, and make them their bosom-companions, just as if no stain were on them, and would not attach to themselves if found in the heart-intimacy of their fellowship. In the exercise of Christian virtue you may forgive an enemy, and love him; but it must be the height of that virtue indeed, and nothing but copying Christ will bring you to it, if you receive him into your intimacy, and treat him the same as if he had never done you an injustice.

A sinner does not want mere freedom; he wants friendship. He does not merely want God to let him go

not visited in vengeance; he wants God to take him back, and spread around him the arms of an everlasting love. As a creature of tastes, sentiments, and sensibilities; as a frail child whose wants and fears are numberless, and many of which words can never explain, nor economies provide for,—he wants a Father to flee to when the storm is rising, and the death-bed spread, and the opening portals of eternity disclose to him the *great white Throne*, and the destinies beyond it.

Even here much of our felicity depends on our fellowship. The best of it does. In the other world we shall meet God. We are sinners, unworthy and vile. Will he meet us as a Friend and a Father, and introduce us into the fellowship of his heart and his heaven? What tells us so? Where is the trustful demonstration of it? *Nowhere*, except in Calvary's Cross and Calvary's Victim. There is a new and peculiar work of God. There I see something beyond nature, beyond law, beyond reason: the heart-work of the infinite One, who has now demonstrated to me the thing I wanted,—that God infinitely loves sinners. Oh! I see! he is infinitely in earnest to save them! I see! he is a Father still! His Son dead—the devil baffled—the tomb opened—the heavens pouring down the spirit of holiness and love,—these new works, all of them works of an infinite compassion and love, demonstrate to me that in the heart of God most high there is still a place for the love of his unworthy child. I could not do without this demonstration. My heart needs it. My fears, my weaknesses, my sensibilities to needed friendship and fellowship with my God, need it. *It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.*

Those of you who stand aloof from this new work of

God and from its covenant to-day, would do well to consider that you have nothing to stand upon. Nature gives you nothing, reason nothing, law nothing. Why will ye die? God has been in earnest to save you. Christ was in earnest when he came from heaven to the crucifixion. *Turn ye to the strongholds, ye prisoners of hope.*

My brethren, as ye come to-day to the Lord's covenant, ye come to meet him, not on the ground of nature, but on that of grace. You need faith. You need a heart to believe in the love of God for sinners,—such a love as all his works, save one, could never demonstrate. Have you got it? As you lift the Cup can you say, Here I give my heart to the God of an infinite mercy and an infinite redemption, and meet the demonstration of his love, with the humble requital of my own? May God enable you to do it. AMEN.

NOTE.—The substance of this sermon, with some additions, was published in the Biblical Repository of October, 1846.

XX.

Crucifixion to the World by the Cross.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—GAL. vi. 14.

IT constitutes one of the masterly strokes in the rhetoric of St. Paul, that he exchanges, at the right point, expressions that are didactic or historical merely, for expressions of personal experience. He does this frequently. And he always does it on such subjects, and in such a way as to make the most happy presentation of the truths he would utter. Sometimes these truths would appear to possess a character of severity if they were uttered in the abstract; and the character of severity is kept out of sight, and one of tenderness imparted to them by expressing them as matters of personal experience. Take that passage, *Oh! wretched man that* I AM, *who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* and couch the truth it conveys in any other form, and you will have one of the most cold and discouraging propositions that words could express. But in St. Paul's form you have the animation of his example, of his resolution and courage. You have his experience, his heart; and no room is left for doubt that he intended to represent the repentance of religion, its humility and

dependence, as deep-seated and strong among the experiences of the heart. Just where you would expect an actor to fail, and just where you would expect a man of real *experience*, a man of conviction, of faith, of fear, of love, to expose his own heart to view, just there St. Paul lays down the truths he would teach by taking them from the depths of his own soul.

We have an example of this in the text. It is not explanation. It is not argument. It is heart. His experience comes out. He tells us how he felt, and leaves the announcement to have what effect it may on the hearts of his hearers. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

Some explanation of this verse may be desirable: *God forbid that I should glory.* St. Paul had enemies and opponents. Some of them were in the church. They formed parties against him, and gloried in their successes in persuading a greater number to side with them than took sides with him. One point of difference was circumcision. St. Paul rejected it. Others adhered to it. They had the advantage of him in attaching numbers to their opinion, and gloried in that advantage. Two causes conspired to give them an advantage. One was that the Jews were all educated in the practice he rejected, and pride of family, of ancestry, pride of name and nation, and all the earlier impressions of their religion—impressions connected with the ancient names of Abraham and Moses, and other prophets and patriarchs—attached them very powerfully to the customs of their fathers. Hence, even though Christians, they were inclined to adhere to the ancient ritual, and glory in it. The other cause was, that three of the Roman emperors

had enacted laws in favor of the Jews dispersed over the Roman empire, allowing them to practise without persecution the ceremonies handed down from their fathers. Hence Christians, who retained the old Jewish ceremonies, were not the subjects of either Jewish or pagan persecution. The pagans reckoned them as Jews, and the enactments of Caius Cæsar, Augustus, and Tiberius shielded them from persecution on account of their religion. The Jews partially owned them as Jews, and ceased to persecute them. Consequently the party opposed to St. Paul were the most numerous, *only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.* They gloried in their security and their number.

St. Paul's answer to all this is drawn from his heart. He falls back on the grand principle of Christianity, the high prerogatives of a believer, *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross.* He would accept contempt. He would suffer persecution. To shun it, he would not creep beneath the imperial laws of Cæsar, or Augustus, or Tiberius. Jesus Christ was a man of persecutions and the Cross. St. Paul felt that it was enough for the *disciple to be as his Lord.*

Probably this is the whole meaning of the clause. It may be, however, that St. Paul meant to express his sense of the honor that was put upon him. Certainly he never was ashamed of the Cross. He bore it willingly. He exulted in it, and perhaps here he intended to express the exultation and glorying of his soul that he was *counted worthy to suffer shame* for the name of Christ. Some have attempted a distinction between the exercises of pride and those of glorying, and have called the one class of exercises quite unfit, and the other quite proper, for a Christian. The justice of their dis-

tinction depends entirely upon their definitions; but it is very probable, after all, that a little ungodly pride may sometimes creep in among what they imagine to be godly glorying. In our opinion, St. Paul takes the word to himself simply because he had just applied it to those with whom he disagreed. *They* gloried, (in an error,) as he said. I suppose they were proud. He would glory, if they chose to call it so, in the Cross of Christ, but not with pride. It is not probable that he changes the meaning of the word when he applies it to himself in the very next sentence after he applies it to them. And it is not probable that he employs it in a good sense when he applies it to those whose course he condemns.

Save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. One of two meanings belongs to this phrase. It may mean the cross which St. Paul bore on account of Jesus Christ, and his faith in him. In this sense it would include all his crosses, his self-denial, sufferings, and shame, his stripes, shipwrecks, bonds, and imprisonments. It may mean, literally, the Cross of the Saviour himself; that what was there shown or done, as it secured the redemption of sinners, was all that St. Paul cared for; that every other offer, and every other argument and motive were as nothing to him. In this sense we understand the expression.

By whom the world is crucified unto me. This is a figure designed to express the little influence which St. Paul felt from the world. To him it had lost its power. It was as a dead thing. His attachment to Christ might expose him to the loss of its favors, and bring upon him contempt and persecutions. But he *counted all things but loss*, and nothing, that he might *win Christ.*

And I am crucified unto the world. In the sense of the scriptures, to be *dead* to any object is to have no more recourse to it, or reliance upon it—not to be swayed and governed by it. Thus St. Paul speaks of being *dead* to sin, and exhorts the Romans to *reckon* themselves *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.* To the Galatians he says, *I, through the Law, am dead to the Law.* He could not think of being justified by it. He renounced it entirely, as much as if he were a dead man, in order that, by the plan of the gospel, he might *live unto God*, as he expresses it. In the phrase before us, St. Paul refines upon this idea. He makes a Christian's *deadness* to the world a *crucifixion* unto the world. It is a death of violence. St. Paul remembers how the natural heart clings to the world, and how all the affections and energies of the living man are devoted to it. He remembers what a violence it is when the truths of religion and the power of the Holy Spirit compel the carnal heart to give up its darling world. He calls it a *crucifixion*, and would no more go back to its embraces than he would desire to be crucified over again. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. I am crucified with Christ.*

This is the sense of the different expressions of the text.

For the more full understanding of it we propose

I. To explain more particularly the mutual crucifixion of the world to the believer, and the believer to the world. And

II. To explain how such a result flows from the Cross of Christ.

I. Wherein consists this reciprocal crucifixion?

We shall explain this by announcing a general principle, and by mentioning some particular experiences.

1. The general principle. We need not know much of the influences of sin in order to understand what are its offers, and where the proposed field of its operations. Its offers are all beneath the moon. Not one of them lies so far off from this little limited planet. The world is the chief object of temptation, and the effect of human sinfulness is to attach men to its enjoyments, gains, and honors. The carnal heart loves this world, and makes it the sole field of its operations. Sin offers it, sin gilds it with deceitful colorings, sin confines thought, affection, and hope to that little circle of objects which lie on this planet, and which can come within the vanishing lifetime of a being who has little prospect of trembling under the weight of threescore years and ten. Another world is out of sight. It is treated by the unbeliever as if it were a fiction. He neither sees it nor feels it. In his action, while his heart beats warm, and his mind musters all its powers, he still seeks the world only. If there is any exception it must be in the things of pride, ambition, honor, in the gains of intellect, or in some of those affections which we may be supposed to carry with us when we depart from the world. But is it a fact, that among the whole army of unbelievers you can find a single man who cherishes a passion, or forms a character, or seeks an acquisition, with any idea of figuring in another world? Does the man of science plod over his books, and expand his mind, and lay in stores of knowledge, for the high and wise purpose of fitting himself to enter upon the scenes of another life? Does the man thirsting for honor fix his mind on the

estimation in which immortal beings shall hold him when the world shall be no more, or does he not confine his honorable aspirations to the estimation of mortals and the world, and, in his very highest mood of mind, only think of the name which he shall leave behind him to be remembered on earth when he is gone? Does the man of taste cultivate that judgment, and that sense of beauty on which taste is founded, and by which it has its delights, for *any* purpose which can be supposed to belong to any future existence? Does the poet train his fancy, wing his thought, and call on the quickened sensibilities within him, for the sake of song to be sung in another world? None of these things. They do not expect to step out on another field, and, among the scenes and society of immortality, to find the full wish of the heart. Not a man of them! On this side of the opening entrance-gate of eternity lie all their hopes, and aims, and treasures.

Now, holiness and Christ have their chief offers elsewhere. They lie in futurity—in heaven. And the general sentiment of the believer is, that *that* world is all in all to him; to this world *he* is *crucified*, and *the world is crucified unto* him. There can be no faith in that heart which does not feel the force of this general principle.

2. We mention some particular experiences. It is impossible to break off all connexion with worldly things. They are necessary to us. We must and ought to feel some interest in them. The world, its government and its goodness, teach lessons about God, and piety is often stimulated by contemplations of the *heavens* which *declare the glory of God*, *and the firmament* which *showeth his handy-work*, and *the earth* which is *full of the*

goodness of the Lord. Moreover, we can scarcely find any example of a believer who has ever attained such a *victory* of faith over the world, as not to exhibit some proofs of too eager a worldly cupidity. The *crucifixion to the world*, in point of fact, therefore, is not perfect. It has its perfection only in principle. But, in principle and in the commenced experiences of the regenerated soul, this *crucifixion* is a *reality.* Look at the particulars.

a. A believer is *crucified unto the world, and the world unto him* in regard to the hopes he entertains of its *friendship.* He has another friend. He turns to him when his friends in this world forsake him. He unbosoms his sorrows to his God. He enjoys his delights and prosperities as coming from God. On this principle St. John speaks, when he affirms, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* On this principle St. James says, *The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* Christians have experienced this. They have been led to see that there is a fundamental opposition between these two friendships; and that if they would have the one, they must renounce the other. They *have* renounced it. The renunciation is one of their fixed principles. And whenever the friendship of the world slides into their hearts, (as sometimes it will,) they soon feel condemned, and ashamed, and injured.

b. A believer is *crucified unto the world, and the world unto* him, in the matter of *his designs.* However he may come short in the execution, it is his sincere disposition to walk according to the will of God. Hence, he can affirm like St. Paul, *Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.* He has designs and principles that are not taken from the world. And hence, like St.

Paul, he can say, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

It is to the ground of this design, these sincere intents to be ruled by God, and to live for immortality, that we are to refer those strong professions that saints have sometimes made. St. Peter made one of them: *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!* David made more than one: *O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. My heart is fixed; O God, my heart is fixed!* Job made such protestations: *I made a covenant with mine eyes, Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands, then let me sow and let another eat, yea, let my offspring be rooted out. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to fine gold, Thou art my confidence, if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, this were an iniquity; I should have denied the God that is above.* On the ground of their hearts' intent, saints protest their innocence. By experience in consciousness they do know that they are *crucified to the world*, so far as designs and dispositions of heart are concerned. Hence they can pray on this ground, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* They want their hearts *crucified to the world*, want a holy correspondence with heaven. *Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God. Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.* On this ground believers utter their most bitter lamentations: *Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

c. A believer is *crucified to the world* in respect to the matters of *hope*. He finds the body hindering him. He finds temporal things shutting out God. He finds the hopes he once indulged of arriving at peace in this life, and living without any intermissions in the light of God's countenance, frustrated; and in the midst of such blighted hopes, and experiencing the fetters with which this world burdens his heart, he longs to be gone to another. *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened . . . whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord . . . we are . . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

Such asseverations are exhibits of a part of a Christian's experience, and that Christian has need to examine himself who has never had a heart to make them. It becomes a solemn question whether he is *crucified to the world*. The crucifixion of earthly, sinful hopes is no gentle thing. The heart clings to its earthly, sinful delights with the grasp of desperation. And when such hopes perish, one after another, and die out of the smitten heart—oh! it is like the vinegar and gall and nails of the crucifixion!

d. A believer is *crucified to the world* in respect to his *object of love*. He once had nothing but the world to love. His heart moved warmly to its offers. It sunk within him when the world frowned. Sensuous delights seemed precious to him. So did intellectual delights, perhaps, and intellectual honors. The reciprocity of affection between him and his loved fellows, appeared all that he could desire or have. It never occurred to him that he wanted to love God, or that communion with God was the very thing he needed at the times when the world seemed a dreary blank, and his vacant

heart wanted something, he knew not what. If he could relish the decencies and tastefulness of a moral life, he could go no further than those. He could not enjoy spiritual things: they were *foolishness unto him.* He could not enjoy God in prayer, in meditation. He could not enjoy him in the covenant, or in his promises. The cause of all this was that he loved the world, and *the things that are in the world*, with an absorbing affection. In respect to such an affection, the believer has experienced a *crucifixion.* Hence you may hear him exclaiming, *My meditation of God shall be sweet. My heart panteth for God. My chief good is to draw nigh to thee.*

e. The believer is *crucified unto the world* in respect to *his efforts.* His efforts are now directed towards something else, and he can say, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* He is far from thinking he may be idle, or has attained perfection; he never indulges such idiot dreams. *Not as though I had already attained or were made perfect, but I follow after. I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

These are some of the particular experiences of *crucifixion to the world.* We cannot now enter into the *pain* of them. We leave that to your remembrance. But just as certainly as you are believers, you have experiences of precisely this nature. Your prized friendships, your designs, your fondest hopes, your love, your efforts—all these have been *crucified to the world.* You have seen its unfitness, its emptiness as a portion for your soul, and, persuaded of God that there is something better for you, you are aiming to reach after it and prepare for it.

II. We proposed to explain how this *crucifixion to the world* results from the Cross of Christ. It is impossible to unfold the whole matter. Take a few items.

1. It is impossible to have any just ideas of the Cross of Christ, without being affected with the idea of the sacrifice there made to divine justice. It was the operative power of this justice that bound Christ to the tree, and took his blood. Jesus Christ was holy himself, but he took our place. Holy though he was, justice demanded of him all that was endured amid the railings and bitterness of men, in the courts of tyrants, in the bloody garden, and on the Cross. The Father forsook him; and he died in ignominy, and amid such spiritual pains and conflicts as divinity alone enabled him to endure. He died for sinners; and in his death God gives sinners a warning of what they may expect if they continue in sin. It is the utmost possible warning. This is the point. It is the utmost possible warning. We may contemplate misery and death stalking over this world from generation to generation; we may look away to the vacated seats whence sinning angels fell in heaven; we may consider anything, and we shall find no such awful determination of divine justice as in the sufferings of the Son of God. But he died for us. He died that we might die unto the world and live to God. If we will not, if we will reject Christ and love the world, what shall the end be of our worldly life? We shall fall under the justice of God. The vials of wrath poured on Jesus Christ's head shall be poured on ours. We shall be bound to suffer for interminable ages, for we perceive, in the death of Christ, the inflexible determination of infinite justice. Here then it is: we must be *crucified to the world* with Christ, and forsake the sin

which binds us to it, and on account of which he died for us; or we must fall back under the wrath of God for ever. For this worldly life, this vanity, this sin, these trifles that occupy us, these bubbles that burst as we touch them, Jesus Christ endured the strokes of divine justice; and surely this consideration ought to be effective to *crucify us unto the world and the world unto us.*

2. The example of Christ tends to excite the same disposition. On the Cross, in darkness and groans and blood, he finishes a life spent in poverty and toil, in hunger and weariness, in doing the will of the Father. And since all this was for us, and since we are his servants, and since, probably, we have no *such* death to die, but expect to die in our beds, surrounded by all the soothings that affection can give, and since he only asks of us to be crucified to the world—never, no, not in a single instance, for the purpose of diminishing our felicity even here—what a disgrace to us if we only love the world, and pant after its ease, its pleasures, its sinful and deceptive indulgences! Is such conduct worthy of us? Is the *servant greater than his Lord?* Shall the disciple complain of his hard couch, or value greatly the down he sleeps on, when the Lord his Redeemer could say, *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head?* Shall the disciple refuse to give up the world, when his Master could, on his account, *set his face* to go up to Jerusalem, and *suffer many things and be killed?*

This idea is wonderfully efficacious for a worldly crucifixion. We meet it often. When we visit the sick, one says, "Yes, I suffer much pain, but Jesus endured much more for me." Another says, "What are my sufferings compared with those of my Saviour!" Another

exclaims, "These pangs, these darts of anguish, all these agonies are not like Christ's! If he was patient, can I murmur?" Thus the world is given up, and felicity in it, without a murmur, and holy patience created by contemplations of the Cross. So of other things.

3. The certainty of the benefits proposed to us in the Cross of Christ tends to *crucify* us *to the world.* We can have these benefits in no other way. *If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.* If a man will do this, he cannot be lost. Aside from the promises, there is that in the Saviour's crucifixion which shows God to be infinitely in earnest to save sinners. The person of Christ is one thing, and the death of Christ is still more. Two infinite wonders. If these do not fix a certainty of God's sincere earnestness to save us, what could? From this sinful world not a sinner under the visitations of the gospel would go down to hell, if he were half as earnest and sincere in seeking salvation as God has been in procuring it for him, and this moment is in urging it upon him. The true Christian feels this. He is disposed to be *crucified to the world*, and animated with a desire to give up its sin, because the Cross of Christ assures him that God will not refuse him any benefit, since he *spared not his own Son.*

4. The Cross of Christ is the measure of the love of God for sinners. Nothing else can gauge its adorable dimensions. This infinite person, and such a person in death, under the burden of our iniquities and the pleasure of the Father to *bruise him!* surely if there is one spot in the heart not death-struck with the insensibility of devils, this ought to affect it! It does affect it. It affected St. Paul's. It was the very idea which *crucified*

him *to the world. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; ye not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

The disposition of an unbeliever is one of suspicion. It does an injustice to God, an amazing injustice. Because sin has darkened his mind, and because God stands between him and his chosen delights, and forbids him, under pain of his everlasting displeasure, to do wrong, the sinner entertains dark suspicions of God, and it is one of the hardest of all difficult things to persuade him that God loves him. Hence, he has no faith in God. He will not let go of the world at his bidding. He will not take the course that God points out, nor accept the offers that God makes him. He will not reckon himself *dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The disposition of a believer is different. He trusts God because he is persuaded that God loves him, and this persuasion, while it comes from the Cross, is the very thing which *crucifies* him *to the world;* and he exclaims, *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

But we must stop. There is no end to this enumeration. The Cross of Christ is a fountain flowing with motives for crucifixion to the world, and the regenerated feel those motives. The divine justice, the example of Christ, the certainty of his benefits, the dimensions of the love of God, gauged by the Cross, and a thousand other ideas which cluster around it, make the Cross of Christ the very thing to *crucify* the believer *to the world.*

One conclusion from all this is irresistibly forced upon us; a conclusion which ought to strike terror into the hearts of many in this assembly. Here, under the gospel,—here, where Christ is to be set forth, crucified among you to-day,—here, where *the Spirit and the Bride say, Come*,—even here there are not a few who will turn their backs upon the Table of the Lord. To them there is *no beauty in Christ*, that they *should desire him*. That matter,—that grand matter, which God designs to break the charm of the world,—is lost upon them. That grand matter which does most to affect Christian hearts, does least to affect theirs. If we were to paint the world in its true colors,—showing its few joys, many sorrows, weaving shrouds, and opening graves under the busy spade of the grave-digger,—we could throw a moment's purpose into their hearts to live for something else than the world. But to speak of the Cross of Christ does them no good. God and they think differently. What shall the end be? *They that despised Moses' law died without mercy. . . . Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?*

Here, then, sinner, see thy hardness, and read thy doom! God has tried to win thee. God has loved thee. God has offered thee Christ, and in him *all things*. God will soon call thee to give an account of the blood of his Son. All your other guilt, all the crimes which sometimes harrow up your conscience, sink into nothing in comparison with your guilt in *denying the Holy One and the just*, in despising his offers, for the contemptible world out of which you will soon pass to the final tribunal!

Another conclusion is very different. The people of God will learn their high privilege. From the Cross they will take motives to vanquish the world. They will see there how much God has loved them, what it cost to redeem them, and what an immortal world is opened to their entrance. From the communion-table they will direct their hopes to the heaven prepared for them. That *house not made with hands*, that reconciled God and Father, that Saviour coming again to receive them to himself, that *glory and honor and immortality*, will pour contempt upon the world, and fit them for all its buffetings. The Holy Spirit will come down. He will *shed abroad the love of God* in the heart. The believer will say, *Draw me and I will run after thee. Teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight!* Grace has saved me. God has loved me. Christ waits for me, and *I am crucified to a world* from whose troubles I shall soon soar away to the mansions of immortality. Praise him, my soul! praise him! I shall see God face to face. I shall sin no more. God will love me, and I will love God, and sing the high anthems of redeeming grace for ever and ever!

XXI.

Faith without Sight.

'Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."—JOHN XX. 29.

THIS is the answer of Jesus Christ our Lord to Thomas, after the latter had become perfectly convinced of his Lord's resurrection from the dead. By some unexplained circumstance or influence, this disciple had not been with the rest at the time when the risen Saviour had previously appeared to them. Perhaps it was by no fault of his that he was not there; his enemies may have prevented him. The civil authority of the city was now in the hands of the enemies of Christ, by whose consent, at least, he had been put to death; and the doctrines which he had preached, and especially his claim to Messiahship, were very unpopular at Jerusalem. Thomas may have been kept from the previous meeting of the disciples, therefore, by official or by popular violence. Perhaps (and this is the more probable) he was absent from that meeting on account of the weakness of his faith. Having seen Jesus Christ in the hands of his foes, and disposed of according to the bitterness of their bloodthirsty malice, Thomas may have been tempted to renounce his hope in Christ, to regard

him as an impostor, and take sides (at least tacitly) with those who had put him to death. A true faith is sometimes terribly shaken. The disappointments it meets make its feebleness tremble, and for a time its possessor seems to acquiesce in the opposition of its enemies. Such may have been the case with this disciple, and, therefore, having almost decided that Jesus was the impostor which his enemies affirmed, and which his crucifixion seemed to prove, he may have abandoned the company of the apostles, and so not been present at the moment in which Jesus Christ first showed himself to them after his passion. It is no uncommon thing to fail of benefits by forsaking good company. Christians, especially weak ones, suffer such a failure often. They leave the companionship of the pious, and are, therefore, absent, Thomas-like, at those very periods when Christ comes, and when they, above all persons, ought to be present to receive confirmation of faith and comfort growing out of it.

But however it may have been with Thomas, he was not there. Christ came, and he was not there! The rest were assembled, they saw Christ, heard him, were glad, and received from him the gift of the Holy Spirit (a gift which it would seem that Thomas, above all, could not afford to dispense with.) The disciples told the story of the resurrection to him when they found him, but he would not believe. He was utterly incredulous—obstinately so. He declared he would *not believe, except he should see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side.* All this Jesus Christ granted him when he appeared to his assembled disciples a second time, when Thomas was there. The incredulity

of Thomas vanished; he was overwhelmed with the proof, and with mingled joy and shame he could only exclaim, in adoration and wonder, *My Lord and my God!* He meant by this to adore God as the promised Emmanuel, as *God manifest in the flesh*, as entitled to all confidence and love and adoration. The significance of his believing expression, when he cried out, *My Lord and my God!* is the more confirmed to us by the "frivolous evasion" to which some resort. Instead of finding in this exclamation a proof of the Deity of Christ, they only find in it a little profane swearing! Such is their interpretation. Rather than acknowledge the Deity of Christ, they will convict Thomas of profane swearing! By their interpretation he is certainly guilty of it. They say he meant nothing by it; he only uttered a sudden exclamation of astonishment. If so, then he took God's name in vain.

My brethren, it is a very difficult task to unite a false theology with a just morality. You would not fear, I suppose, to copy the morality of Thomas—certainly not that portion of it which appeared in this conversation. If, then, you adopt the interpretation we combat, you will not hesitate to make the exclamation, *My Lord and my God*, whenever anything greatly and suddenly astonishes you. If you do make such exclamations, you take God's name in vain. It is a hard thing to reject true doctrines and yet retain good principle. Thomas acknowledged the Deity of Christ—he adored him as God. He did not fall into the crime of profanity on this very solemn occasion.

The response of Jesus Christ to this adoring confession of the apostle is our text, *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed;*

blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Lest the treatment which Thomas experienced at the hands of Jesus should lead some of you to think too lightly of your unbelief, and to imagine you may justly withhold your faith in Christ till you have more evidences to found it upon, we wish to call your attention to the incredulity of Thomas. We ought not too much to blame him. I am persuaded that his unbelief is susceptible of apologies which yours cannot plead.

1. He had had no such clear explanation of the gospel proceedure as we have had. He did not know in what manner the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world. The whole apostolic college did not know. They knew the fact. They knew the promises commenced in Eden to the fallen pair, and continued through ages to such men as Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and Joel; they knew that these promises would be fulfilled, but they knew not when or how. It has ever been a defect in the religion of men, that they are so reluctantly constrained by it to make its benefits spiritual and eternal to any just degree. They let go of the world very slowly. Their faith, their minds and hearts, move towards God with a very manifest reluctance, as if in that path of movement they were burdened with a heavy load to bear along. It was so with the disciples. They looked for an *earthly kingdom.* St. Peter would not assent to Christ's own prediction of his death. He said, *This shall never be unto thee, Lord;* and even at the last hour he was found armed with a material weapon, ready to strike with courage and energy for his Master, and Christ had

to say to him, *Put up thy sword into the sheath.* A pious mother, with just that maternal affection which always sinks self-interest in the interest of her children, had prayed Jesus that her *two sons might sit one on his right hand, the other on his left*, in that earthly kingdom which she expected him to establish. After all the plainness and reiteration of Christ's propheeies about himself, his death and resurrection, it is said of his followers, *As yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he should rise from the dead.* After he had risen, even, some of them could give a mournful account of the erucifixion and their hopelessness: *We thought it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.* Evidently their hearts were too much upon an earthly kingdom. Evidently this fact misled their understandings, and left their ideas too worldly, and too little spiritual and eternal.

Now, while they were expeeting a temporal kingdom to be set up—while they looked for the son and heir of David to ascend his throne, and knew he *could* ascend it by means of those miraculous powers whose effects they had so often witnessed, suddenly the scene is changed. The light which shone in the miracles, and which seemed to be the dawn of Israel's glory, goes out. Jesus is arrested, tried, mocked. His enemies triumph over him. He is taken from the Cross, and hurried away to the tomb. And now that the faith of Thomas should have been staggered is nothing wonderful. The promises seemed to have been falsified. The power of miracles seemed to have failed, or to have fallen out of Christ's hands. The Father seemed to have utterly abandoned him, and faith and hope seemed to be wrapped round with that pall of darkness which en-

velops the tomb! The apostle, after all this disappointment, this chain of circumstances which seemed to contradict faith, wanted something more than the testimony of a few women and a few disciples, before he would believe that his *Lord* and his *God* had arisen from the dead. He wanted to see him. His own eyes had beheld him in his calamity, and now he wanted the same kind of evidence of his resurrection. Any of us might have wanted the same thing. This seems almost to be a demand of nature. To satisfy a stricken heart that it need not bleed, seems almost to require the same kind of evidence that it had in its felicity.

2. Yes, this incredulity of Thomas may have arisen mainly from an affectionate disposition, a prizing of the very thing which it could not believe. You must be very ignorant of human nature if you do not know that there are hearts which require more proof for good things than for bad ones. If this is not general, there are such. Most of our hearts are such in their seasons of sadness. A deep grief once felt, harshly wearing out a channel for itself in the soul, seems to incline us to disbelieve any thing that is good, and prepare us to believe any thing that is sorrowful. *We* know this very well, if you do not. As clergymen, we come in contact with afflictions which feel bound to *refuse to be comforted.* And we have learned that often, very often, the heart is so far gone from the temper of hope, that we can comfort it best by the very ideas which seem to confirm its despondency; we drive the probe of affliction to the bottom of the wound for the very purposes of the salve of consolation. Affectionate dispositions, once saddened, are the most difficult to be comforted. They are the most slow to believe in any thing that is comforting.

Love and tenderness are timid things. Before we give ourselves up to the joy, we want sure grounds; we want to *know* that our sacredness of sorrow is not to be trifled with; that we are not to be flung back into a grief made more cutting by a momentary hope.

Now, this may have been just the case with Thomas in his unbelief. He loved Christ, perhaps, with more than an ordinary affection. Perhaps that affection kept him away from the first meeting of the disciples, when Jesus met them after his resurrection. There is a sacredness in the grief of an affectionate heart which disinclines one to all kinds of communion but two—communion with his own spirit and with God. Thomas may have been indulging this sacredness of grief; and afterwards, when the disciples told him that Christ had arisen, the tidings may have been so contrary to the whole impression which sadness had made upon his affectionate heart, that he could not believe their testimony. He wanted evidence of his own eyes—the Saviour before him—the nail-prints and the spear-gash. He had it; and in adoring joy he says to Jesus, *My Lord and my God!*

These are some of the considerations which plead an apology for the incredulity of Thomas, and forbid us to excuse our unbelief by the plea of his example.

But certainly his unbelief was not innocent. While Christ gratified him, he reproved him. He had believed by seeing, but our Lord pronounces them blessed who had believed without seeing. He intimates that if others should be as unbelieving as Thomas, very few would inherit the blessing; that believers who had never seen him would suffer by that reason no loss. Such unbelief as that of Thomas would be fatal to Christianity.

Jesus Christ was about to depart out of the world, to be hidden from the eyes of its inhabitants until the last day; and after that, every man who should say as Thomas did, must perish in unbelief. After his ascension there must be some way of believing without seeing, or gospel faith and gospel salvation must cease; *Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.*

We are going to explain this blessedness. Belief, faith, is an assent of the mind to truth, caused by the evidences which substantiate it. So far it is intellectual. But Christian faith goes beyond this, and besides assenting in conviction to the truth in the abstract, embraces positively and personally the great object of faith, Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the gospel to save.

What we have now particularly to consider consists in the *evidences of the truth* on which faith is founded. There are different sorts of evidence, and therefore different ways in which evidence may be reached. There are consequently different original principles in man *by* which faith operates, and which we denominate the original principles of faith. Let us see what they are. We blend the two together, *i. e.*, the evidence and the principles.

1. There is the evidence of the senses. This needs little explanation. It is an original principle of believing. Man is so made that he is compelled to believe when he has the evidence of his senses. This kind of evidence is what Thomas wanted, and Jesus Christ finally granted it to him. But this is what *we* cannot have; we must believe though we *have not seen.*

But our lack of this kind of evidence is not necessarily an unhappiness. As the text implies, if we believe on

other kinds of evidence, our faith has a superiority attached to it, and we do not fall under the rebuke which came upon the incredulity of Thomas.

2. There is therefore an evidence of testimony. In man there is another original principle of believing, by which he is convinced of that which is sufficiently proved to him by competent witnesses. No other account can be given of this. You cannot explain it. An overlooking of this principle, or an ignorance of it, was what led Hume into his argument against Christianity. His metaphysics were as foggy as his religion was false. He was as distant from true philosophy as from the Bible.

On this ground most of my convictions, of my knowledge, rests. There is more which lies beyond the reach of my senses, than comes within the compass of them. On this ground, I believe the common details of history, and make the map of the past my guide for the future. On this ground, the bench and the jury-box found their decisions, so that the property, liberty, life, and death of every man among us are under the control of this principle.

Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. Thomas had this sufficiency of testimony to Christ's resurrection, and it was a fault in him that he would not receive it. His demand to *see* was assuming a ground of faith which would cut him off from all ordinary intercourse with men, and ordinary pursuits in the world.

A demand of the evidence of the senses goes to materialize everything. It puts out of the pale of faith immaterial and spiritual objects. *No man hath seen God at any time.* It therefore dishonors God himself. It disdains all evidence of spirituality, and would bring

him down to the grossness of matter before it would own him at all. It dishonors man's own soul. It assumes the position that that immaterial spirit has nothing in it whereby it can have *knowledge*, only as it comes in contact with the grossness of matter. Indeed, this demand of the evidence of the senses is an insult to the Deity. You consider yourself insulted if your neighbor will not believe your word, although you belong to a race some of whom have been known to lie. And *God, who cannot lie*, will much more consider himself insulted if one will not believe the testimony which he hath given of his Son. Such a one *makes* even *God a liar! Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.* They stand on higher ground—more above the brute. They employ their own souls better. They honor God more. They can meet him as he is, and take him at his word. His word! Oh! rock, rock! eternal rock! Let me live upon it; let me die upon it! Let me plant my footstep upon it when I step off from this material scene to become an inhabitant of eternity! *Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.*

3. There is an evidence of reason. This is also a very extensive ground of faith. It implies a process of the understanding. Its proceeding is to commence with some known truths as premises, and on them to found conclusions, which conclusions are other truths that may be employed in the like manner. For example: my eyes have convinced me that sunshine is needful to the production of the fields, to the colored beauty of the blossom, and the ripened grain. It is unreasonable to conclude that the harvest would come in well without it, though I can see no reason why it should not. Because it never did, as I clearly see to some extent,—and

as I know to greater extent, by credible testimony,—therefore, by reason, I conclude it never will. This conclusion is faith. To rest on such conclusions of a just reasoning is one of the original principles of believing. No other account of it can be given. You cannot explain it—not a word, not a syllable. You can only say, so God has made the human mind. Men employ this principle of reasoning in a very large portion of the duties and operations of life. Their faith, their belief, and consequently their actions, are founded on its conclusions. It aids to enjoin honesty, industry, temperance, benevolence, and other virtues. It aids also to enforce the spiritual graces, and those high aims which reach forth towards the felicity of *another country, even an heavenly.*

Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. Here I am to to stay but a little while. Possibly I may reach threescore years and ten, though I do not expect it. And here my happiness is very imperfect. The flowers that delight me, die as I gaze on them! my tears have streamed upon the tomb of my father! within my heart are wants the world cannot meet! I feel that I am capable of a felicity that the world cannot give, and cannot take away! But this is God's world, and I am God's creature, and God is good. Can I, then,—can I possibly conclude, with any show of reason, that this brief life, these fading delights, these tears, and these tombs, are all that a good God has to give me? It would be an unreasonable conclusion, and as unblessed as unreasonable. Such a faith would dishonor God. It would distress my soul. It would hang the pall of an eternal midnight over the whole world, and make me live in it and die out of it in despair! My reason, then,

—the whole force of my reason,—enjoins upon me to *believe*, although I have not *seen* it, that there is another world; that God has a good in store for those that please him, better than all he gives them here; that there will be a final adjudication made in righteousness; and that to love God and serve him, and *lay up treasures in heaven*, are the most reasonable things in the universe. *Blessed are they* that *believe it.* They rise above the grossness of the senses. Their immaterial soul anticipates a *new heavens and new earth.* They look forward to that *spiritual body* which shall be greeted by the light of the resurrection-morn, and shall greet Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, to claim his own! Here, then, sinner though I am,—frail mortal, dashed about in the world, and not knowing when I shall be dashed to pieces,—here, come affliction! I bare my bosom to thine arrows! Death, I dare thee! Grave, do thy worst! My reason —the whole power of my reason—sustains me when I believe the promise, *Because I live, ye shall live also!*

4. There is an evidence of the heart. The argument and the illustration we have just uttered are applicable to it. You will excuse us from any other. We only state the principle. It is this: Human nature has its affections as well as its eyes, and through the medium of its affections as really as through the medium of its eyes, it ought to have faith. Man ought to believe as well by the working of his heart as by the opening of his eyelids. Why not? When he opens his eyes he believes the *light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.* He not only believes that light exists, but he believes also that there is something in it which meets the wants of his nature, which gives him pleasure. On the same principle, why shall he not

believe his heart? It has capacities, has wants, is capable of pleasure as well as his eyes, and why, then, shall he not give it the like credit? He does credit it to some extent, necessarily. He does *believe* to some extent by the medium of it. This is an original principle of belief. You can give no other account of it. You cannot explain it; not a word, not a syllable. You only know that it is so. On this principle, you believe that in all ordinary circumstances society is good for you; that you cannot be happy in eternal solitude, cut off from all intercourse with your fellows. You believe it because you find it so; you believe your heart, just as you believe your eyes. On the same principle you believe that you need some one to love, and some one to love you—something to hope in; your heart demands some covenant of promise to spread its securities over the future.

And, oh! how blessed for the heart, if it will only consent to be such a heart as to give up its world, and let heaven and God satisfy it! *Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.* They have done an honor to God which is due to him. They have opened to him their hearts, as he stood *at the door and knocked;* and when he came *in* and *supped with* them, and they *with him*, they said, *This is all my salvation and all my desire.* Their heart has found that to love God and meet him in Christ, to take his offered pardon, to commune with him and hope in him, while graves are digging and the soul is rushing towards another world,—their heart has found that this is portion enough. *Blessed are they that have believed* thus. We do not profess to exhaust this subject, but—

5. There is an evidence of conscience. The explana-

tion about it is much the same as that just given. By the means of conscience, a man believes that there is such a thing as right, and such another thing as wrong; that he himself is a sinner, and needs pardon to avoid the strokes of a just God, and be able to die without fear. Thus, by the testimony of conscience, as well as by the testimony of seeing, man believes many things. Conscience has its demands, and they are known not to be fictitious ones, as well as visible things are known to exist, and have beauty or deformity in them. This is an original principle of faith. You cannot explain it; not a word, not a syllable. You can only know that it is so. Conscience has its demands. It has remorse and fear about it, and needs pacification. How can a man be happy when stung to the quick by stings of self-condemnation, and when, as he looks off to another world and an offended God, it is just a *fearful looking for of fiery indignation! Our God is a consuming fire.* He will call us to an account. His wrath will burn up his enemies.

And, oh! how blessed for us all, if we will only consent to believe on the testimony and through the medium of the conscience within us, and know our sin, and be constrained to betake ourselves to the blood of atonement! Then we should be sheltered from fear; we should behold one standing between us and the anger of God, a bloody offering of God's infinite love, and know that divine justice can ask no more. He has met it. He has met it for us. He has responded to its last demand. Its sword drank his blood, poured out like water, so much he loved us; and now, having risen from the dead, he has *gone to appear in the presence of God for us*, the mangled body of the Cross now the body of his glory.

Taking shelter in his atonement, if you will only do so freely, and appropriate all his offering to yourself, you may have *joy and peace in believing.* You will thus put an honor on God's love which justly belongs to it. You will exalt it to its own high place. Oh! believer, God did not merely love you enough to provide for you when you wanted much, he loved you enough to provide for you when you wanted *every thing!* You were a lost sinner, cut off from God. Justice condemned you! Hell yawned to swallow you up! You were just on its brink! Love, unequalled love, adorable love of an adorable God, found a ransom, and therefore you are here, and not in hell! therefore you are here to-day to exercise your love and profess your faith in Christ, *though you see him not!*

And now, I ask you,—I ask you, as having not merely eyes, but as confiding in fit testimony, as having reason, having a heart, having a conscience,—I ask you if any thing short of this love of God would meet your wants—your wants as a sinner, as a creature soon to die and stand before the *great white throne,*—I ask you, do not the original principles of your nature, your wants, your sin, your death, and your destination, urge you to full faith in Jesus Christ? He can meet all your wants. He owns your world; he owns your grave; he has gone before you through its dark portals into eternity. If you will only believe, on the fit grounds of believing, you will honor God more than if you saw him with your own eyes; you will believe his word, just as you believe one whom you love and confide in; you will trust your heart to him, your conscience to him, your soul to him, your time and your eternity to him. Then, also, you will be ready to obey him, to make

sacrifices for him, to *cut off a right hand or pluck out a right eye*, or sacrifice, like Abraham, a home and country, or an only son, at his bidding. And doing so, you will find God present with you, and your experience of his love and grace will raise you above the need of sight. *Be not faithless, but believing.*

If you are in darkness now, you will not be in darkness always. Indeed, you will gain light at every step, if you employ the original principles of faith, beyond the mere senses. If you will believe in *testimony*, you will dive into God's word, and the more you study it, the more will the divinity of its light beam upon your soul. You will pray also, and the opened heavens and the realized answer will comfort your soul. If you will believe by the *heart*, will only let the heart say what it wants, a God to love and lean upon, and let it try God in Christ, you will soon say, Give me God's love and I ask no more. If you will believe by an exercised *conscience*, you will serve God in sincerity, and doing *the works you* will *know of the doctrine whether it be of God.* And on all these grounds you will be just acting as a probationer ought, who is here to be tried and to be trained for the world to come. And when you find yourself acting thus, you will find that your course accords with the demands of your nature, with the love of God, with the call of Christ, with the requirements of your spending life, your sepulchre, and your eternity.

You cannot here *see* Christ, and the fact that you cannot is a proof in itself that God has put you on your probation, and is trying you whether you will serve him without sight—whether you love him well enough to trust him for a little while—whether you prize truth

well enough to encounter difficulties in finding it—in one word, whether you will be wise enough to give up the love of the world for the love of Christ and the Father.

Your probation will soon end. If you have spent it rightly, in the faith of Jesus, you shall soon *see him as he is.* You shall see him in his glory. You shall see him, the nail-prints in his hands, and the spear-gash in his side, and adore him with ineffable gratitude, love, and wonder, *My Lord and my God!* He will say to you, *Come, thou blessed of my Father! thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* 'Tis done! Salvation is gained, by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ! The song goes up around the throne of redemption, *Alleluiah unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

XXII.

Mystery of Redemption fit for Faith.

"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."—Romans iii. 24, 25

THE ideas contained in this passage are very clear, and very logically connected. There are five of them.

1. The first is that of justification by free grace. A sinner can be justified in no other way, for the reason that God has made no other provision for him, and he can make none for himself. He is under law—under a law that his sin has violated, (or he would not be a sinner,) and the law steadfastly holds him to its requirements on the pain of its penalty. That law knows nothing about devices or compensation. Its language is, *Do this, and live;* or, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* Therefore if a man is a sinner he cannot be justified by law. Justification includes an acquittal on trial, a declaration of freedom from all penalty and blame, so that the individual will stand clear and accepted as righteous under the authority and dominion which are exercised over him. A sinner, therefore, if justified at all, must be justified freely by grace, *i. e.*, by mere favor, by mercy, which is the first idea of the text.

The *second* is the *mode* by which this free justification comes. It operates through *the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* The grace of justification comes in no other way. Christ has *redeemed* sinners, and therefore they can be pardoned and accepted as righteous in God's sight. This justification of them is not at all grounded on anything which they themselves shall do or suffer, shall promise or purpose or feel. Condemned in themselves, the redemption of Jesus Christ alone can deliver them from the curse of the law.

The *third* idea is that of the *authority* on which Jesus Christ acted in this great work of a momentous redemption. He was no deliverer sprung from earth, no procured aid called forth by the cries of the miserable, no unauthorized power intervening between law and its victims. He was authoritatively appointed to this office, (*whom God hath set forth,*) and bore along with him the credentials of the court of heaven. His official testimonials had a threefold commendation.

First: all nature, all creation obeyed him—sickness, blindness, deafness, human bones and blood, winds and storms, the grave, and death, and devils.

Second: he was the fulfilment of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament—the burden of the whole series of divine revelations, reaching from paradise and the first day of sin, through wasting centuries, down to the inquiries of the wise men who *saw his star in the east and came to worship him.* The blindness or rebelliousness, therefore, which rejects him, must at the same time carry its incredulity back through the sweep of ages, and deny Abraham, and blot out the names of Moses and the prophets, and contradict Egypt, and the Red Sea, and Jordan, and Shiloh, and Jerusalem.

Third: his whole revelation, character, promises, and the work he came to accomplish, were perfectly adapted to man—to all man's character, condition, and prospects, to his hopes and fears, his heart and conscience, his tomb and eternity.

These were the Saviour's credentials. These three things, if anything could, demonstrated that he acted on the authority of the infinite God: *whom God hath set forth*, says the text.

The *fourth* idea of the text is that of atonement, the great centre and substance of the work of Jesus Christ in achieving the sinner's redemption. He came to be *a propitiation*. He did not redeem by mere power, by mere wisdom, or mere authority. That would not do. That would neither answer God's purpose nor the sinner's. The law stood in the way, and God stood by it, and he was impelled to stand there by the double influence of the regard he had for his own authority and honor, and the regard he had for that moral government under the shelter of which lives all the felicity which exists in the universe. Something more than power and wisdom and authority was needed, therefore. There must be a *propitiation*, an expiation by blood—and the victim was ready. The Father gave his Son. The Son gave himself. He had *power to lay down his life, and power to take it again*. He satisfied law by an all-sufficient atonement. He made an expiation for sin. He became *a curse* in the sinner's room. And therefore the scriptures speak of the *flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*.

The *fifth* idea of the text is that of the manner whereby sinners become interested in this propitiatory redemption. It is by faith—*through faith in his blood*

It is not the economy of redemption to save sinners by a mere work of sovereignty and grace without them, by a stupendous transaction for them to look at without assenting to it, or to admire without trusting in it. It is the economy of redemption to save sinners through faith, through faith *within* them; through a faith whereby they meet God on the spot where God proposes to meet them; a faith whereby they trust their souls just on that foundation whereon God hath entrusted his own dignity and honor; a faith which, believing in *the kindness and love of God our Saviour*, flees to his blood for the remission of sins, and knows that God *can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Aside from this faith, the redemption of Christ will do him no good. He must *believe* in order to be saved.

These are the simple and connected ideas of the text. But we do not propose to discuss them separately. We blend them, making the last rather a leading idea. The rest pertain to the redeeming love of God, and this pertains to the duty of sinners. Sinners ought to have faith. Some of you think you have, and over the august emblems of its infinite object you will to-day profess it.

It may aid you to do so comfortably, perhaps, and may, perhaps, remove some difficulties out of the way of unbelievers, if we consider this matter of faith, and the high and strange ground upon which it acts. We propose this.

There is something in this matter set forth in the text (as we have explained it) which, we confess, is very apt to stagger the human mind. This is a strange plan. Creatures, sinners, are to be dealt with *not* according to their deservings. A just God is to deal with them dif-

ferently. If they believe in Christ he will save them, while not meriting anything but punishment. He will indeed do unbelievers no injustice; but the justification, the adoption, the everlasting salvation of believers,—all this is an infinite, unmerited gratuity. And all this is done under the government of a just God, who holds sin in infinite abhorrence, and who must maintain his authority both for his own sake and for the sake of the best good of his universe. This strikes many minds as so strange, so apparently incompatible with equity and the maintenance of authority, that unbelief seems to them more natural, if not more reasonable, than faith. Indeed, the powers and principles of a moral and accountable existence seem almost to wage conflict with this economy. The proposal, it is said, will come up, Let us *do evil that good may come;* and this argument is employed to overturn this doctrine of gratuitous justification, by the idea that the doctrine subverts conscience and introduces all license to sin.

Further: this economy is apt to appear counter to law, and this makes God contradictory to himself, and his government an inconsistency. Many a doubter queries, What has this man whom you call a believer *done*, that he should be saved, while an unbeliever by the side of him—no greater sinner than he is—is going to be lost? And his doubtful mind is no better satisfied when we answer, He has done nothing but believe.

Further still: this matter of such a strange redemption sometimes appears inconsistent with the independence and magnificence of the Deity. One surmises that God cannot possibly care so much for such an insignificant creature as man. He is a being of yesterday, a child and worm of the dust. He is an unworthy crea-

ture if the doctrine of redemption is true; and the doubting unbeliever (and perhaps the tempted believer also) finds it difficult to think that such a redemption as this comports with the magnificence and independence of God.

And still further: this Redeemer, this propitiating Christ who shed his blood, was the eternal Son of God, —God equal with the Father. He himself, before his incarnation, (another deep and dark mystery!) made the very sinner he came to redeem. He made law, and yet came under the law in the infinite Personage, *God manifest in the flesh.* He fixed the penalty, and yet faced all its dreadfulness himself. He took the sinner's nature, the sinner's place, bore his curse, endured wrath, *contradiction of sinners against himself*, temptation of devils, and even death itself, and was hurried away a mangled corse to the tomb. And then, and on that account, sinners became pardonable, God placable, and heaven attainable.

These and other things like these are matters included in this redemption by the blood of Christ, which things appear so wonderful and strange that they constitute no small difficulty in the way of faith.

Let us attempt to surmount them. We own their magnitude, but they are not insuperable.

To meet all such difficulties, and to conduct us to full and saving faith in just this Christ and his redemption, we bring the following argument.

I. Sin. This economy of redemption is just for sinners. We confess it is a deep, strange, and mysterious economy—one, certainly, of the most mysterious things that God ever did—beyond expectation, beyond reason, beyond even all the stretch of the imagination. But is

this any reason for discrediting it? On the contrary, is not this one of the very strongest reasons for believing it? Sin itself (which this mysterious redemption specifically regards) is a wonderful mystery. It is an exception and disorder in the universe. The only original disorder, *i. e.*, the cause of all others. God hates it. He infinitely and unchangeably hates it. How could he permit it? Prevent it he certainly could if he is God. He does now prevent it in heaven, and, when he pleases, on earth: he begins its prevention in every sinner he regenerates, and if he cannot prevent it when and where he will, how can we pray him to make us holy, and how can we trust him to keep us forever in heaven and secure us from all sin and all loss forever? Able to prevent it, then, and hating it—hating it more than he hates anything else—how could he suffer it to come into existence? This is a strange mystery. We cannot explain it. Yet sin is here. The fact is unquestionable. It stains every human heart; it works mischief in every community. It lets loose pestilences, it wakes enmity and avarice and envy, makes wars, weaves shrouds and digs graves, and beyond all this, in another world it has built hell,—and if that hell were not to be eternal, I could not believe that Jesus Christ had come down from heaven and died on the Cross to redeem sinners from it. The eternity of hell and the wonders of Christ's redemption correspond. If one is true, the other is true. If one is false, the other must be false. The marvel of Christ's propitiation corresponds with the marvel of sin's existence. And because, just because there is something wonderful, deep, and mysterious in the facts that the Ancient of Days should become an infant a span long, that the sinless should suffer, that blood should atone

and that God should be reconciled to sinners in that way—just precisely because of this dark wonder I can believe and trust in it. The mystery of redemption perfectly corresponds with what redemption aims after; God saving sinners is as much above me and beyond me as God permitting sin; and I am constrained to *faith in his blood.* The strangeness of redemption corresponds with the strangeness of sin; the mystery of the one assorts with the mystery of the other; God is as much above me in Christ as he is above me in Adam, and in both,—the wonders of sin and the wonders of redemption,—he is precisely like himself, infinite, amazing, and for ever incomprehensible.

II. This redemption of Christ, so clear in the fact and so deep in the philosophy.

"Dark through brightness all along," this redemption has respect to immortality, to eternity. Christ died to procure immortal life and glory for his people.

Familiarity with these things (as often happens with such beings as we are) may prevent us from thinking much about them; but it is true that the dying of a human creature, and his passing into that dark world that is out of sight, are very strange and dreadful matters. More strange still is the dying of a Christian. Child and beloved child of God though he is, he must encounter what is to him the most awful thing he can ever think of, save one. He must die! His spirit must forsake its clay, and step off into that other world his eyes cannot reach, and from which no messenger comes back to tell him what shall betide him there. Save the anger of God itself, this is the most terrible of all things which human nature can think of. It is a dark and strange matter. It is a dreadful wonder. What is it

to die? We cannot tell. We can name the visibilities about it, the ceasing breath, the cooled blood the stiffened frame, and the pale, pale cheek,—but is that all? Oh! no, no! There is a *dark valley*, the spirit-path into eternity! We cannot describe it. It is not for us to tell how the spirit that walks there shall think or feel, or hold intercourse with other beings, since it has left behind the body, the machinery for thought and feeling and intercourse. Yet it is to have life. It is to see without eyes, and hear without ears, and feel, while all its deep emotions shall not make one pulsation in the cold heart it has left behind. It is still alive. But what is that life? Can it *be* life?

Amid such ideas as these we come across things very dark and wonderful to us. We cannot explain them. We can only believe and wonder and tremble. Human nature and all philosophy can do no more.

The case is just the same about immortality. Why is that dark and impenetrable curtain hung over eternity? I want to see into the other world. If I am to go there, and there to abide forever, I want to have at least a glimpse of my future home. Especially since here I am to prepare for it, and my destiny there is linked with my demeanor here, why does that dark pall wave over the very entrance-gate into eternity? This dying, and this living beyond death, are certainly very wonderful matters to us. We cannot explain them. In reference to them, philosophy and human nature may search where they will and they find nothing to do us any good; the pall will still hang over eternity, and the trembling will still shudder in human hearts.

But Jesus Christ died to bring *life and immortality to light.* He died to destroy *him that had the power of death,*

that is, the devil. Whatever marvel or mystery there may be about the strange redemption of Jesus Christ, we could not do without it. Our very reason and hearts demand it. We want God to be as wonderful to us in *life and immortality*, as he is in death and an undiscoverable eternity. If death is to be vanquished for us, we want some arm revealed to us which is able to shiver his dart into pieces at the very moment it strikes us, and enable us to shout *victory* as we fall! If we are to live again when we are dead, are to live forever in that strange life which is such a mystery to us, are to be led along a *dark valley*, every step in midnight, till we see out at the further end of it, and are to be introduced unto eternal holiness and accepted of God, sinners though we are,—certainly we want the magnitude and the mystery of this redemption to accord with the magnitude and mystery of dying and being immortal and blissful forever. The strangeness of a blood-bought redemption corresponds with that which redemption seeks after; God giving the victory over death, and an unseen immortality beyond it, is as much above my comprehension as he is in hiding my eternity from me at the very time when he commands me to prepare for it, and in calling me to grapple with the King of Terrors though he loves me with an unequalled tenderness and strength. The great *mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, and received up into glory*, assorts with the mystery of immortality. God is as much above me in Christ as he is above me in the coffin; as mysterious in the Cross as he is in conducting me to immortality by that *dark valley* that leads to it; and in both he is precisely like himself, infinite, amazing, and incomprehensible forever. And because—just precisely because there *is* something amaz-

ing in this free and procured redemption, I can trust to it. God stands before me in the same majesty and incomprehensibility, clothed with the same cloud of wonders, when he preaches Christ to me, as when he loves me and kills me—as when he tells me to prepare for eternity, and keeps it out of my sight. *Life and immortality are brought to light* just as they should be. The mode assorts with the facts.

III. Both on account of our littleness and our sin, it is not easy for us to have just ideas about God's actual designs toward us. We are very little creatures in his sight. Annihilate us, and it could make very little difference to him. We are as unworthy as we are insignificant before him. Yet we have wants, we have amazing wants. There is an indescribable depth in the agonies which sometimes make our hearts bleed even here; and when our thought takes its journey to the world to come, along a pathway of *thorns and thistles*, down into the valley of death, and away beyond the resurrection of the dead into the abysses of eternity, still as much beyond thought as ever—the idea of our destiny, our eternal want, presses upon the spirit within us, as if it would crush us into nothing! What friend shall help us? Human sympathy can do much for us, we admit; it is precious to us, very precious. But we require something more. Human sympathy cannot reach our deepest want of spirit even now, and cannot reach our spirits at all after our breath stops. We need God's sympathy. We need God to love us, and be kind to us, and let us lean on him now, when our footsteps stagger upon the dark mountains of death, and when we take the spirit-journey of an awful eternity! Nothing but God will do for us. We want the friend who knows

the secret chambers of our heart, and who owns eternity. But how shall we get him? how shall we be assured of him? It will be an amazing stoop of his infinity if he cares much for me! I am a worm of the dust, a vile worm, a sinner. It must be an eternal marvel if the infinite and eternal Monarch, holy and august as he is, will extend his actual and everlasting kindness toward me! And I will not believe it unless he approaches me in some *mode* as wonderful as is my wonderful need —in some amazing mode to correspond with such an amazing and wonderful condescension to his guilty and dying worm. He has done so, in this amazing redemption—he has precisely done so. The magnitude of *his* grace corresponds with the magnitude of *my* needs. Christ's worthiness becomes my worthiness. The necessities of my immortal spirit, which I am called on to wonder at more than to explain, perfectly accord with the economy of redemption, which amazes me—comforts me *because* it amazes me. *The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man hath appeared.* Christ is the mysterious demonstration. Begone, my fears! Lie still, my throbbing heart! Hope, hope, my immortal spirit! God does love me! God does care for me! The wonders of his mode of showing it correspond with the wonder that he should care for me at all—that the Infinite One should stoop to his worm, that eternal holiness should be pacified towards guilt. Here, then, I can trust. Here I can live—here I can die—here I can cast my mysterious and mysteriously *wanting* soul into the arms of God, and *whatever* it may want on earth or in the spirit-land, the majesty of Christ accords with the magnitude of its distressful necessities. *He that spared not his own Son but freely delivered him up for us*

all would not be the premises of an argument broad enough for the conclusion *How shall he not with him freely give us all things*, were there not in the gift such a majesty as must be a mystery to us. But there is. Blessed be God, there is! Beyond Christ, I cannot want anything. The mode of the gospel assorts with my creature littleness and guilt, and with the wonder of God's needed care for me. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul!*

IV. The redemption of Christ has respect to God's spiritual dominion over sinners in loving, pitying, and saving them. God has different kingdoms over which he presides, and wherein he exercises his holy attributes and displays his adorable majesty. But they are not all alike, nor alike marvellous, nor alike glorious to himself. For example:

1. He presides over nature, matter: *the heavens declare the glory of God; the drops of the dew* proclaim him their Father; *the lilies of the field,—Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

2. He presides over *mind. He maketh his angels spirits.* As for man, when his body *returns to dust as it was, his spirit shall return to God who gave it.*

3. He presides over—(I care nothing about the logic of this enumeration. I only wish you to understand the great idea)—he presides over sensibility. There is something beyond the mere intellect to perceive truth. There are hearts to feel it, and these hearts have arrived at their highest species of good when *the love of God is shed abroad in them by the Holy Ghost.*

In all these domains of nature, matter, mind and sensibility, there is something to disclose God and exalt him. But there is something beyond all these, and not

only something beyond, but something to which they are only subordinate and auxiliary.

There is a fourth kingdom—of virtue, of conscience, of right and wrong. *Therein* is God's glory more especially manifested. He cares more about holiness than about all the matter that ever took form and motion from his hand, and all the intellect which ever labored in science to understand it.

But there is another step to this ladder before we reach the top. God presides over sinners to make *them* holy—to redeem and recover them. This is his highest glory. And for the sake of this, all other things exist—matter and mind, even angels, *ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation.* A redeemed sinner in heaven is more glorious to God than an angel who never fell from heaven. That redeemed sinner discloses a new class of God's infinite perfections—a higher class—a more glorious class. He gives us a new view, and a most amazing view, of the infinite and adorable attributes of the Godhead,—God's mercy, God's *kindness and love* for poor, unworthy sinners, his enemies! God's own heart, his highest glory, becomes manifest in the redemption of sinners. This is his highest kingdom. He cares more about this than he cares about anything else.

Have patience Hold this idea in your mind, and link it with another before you apply it. What do you mean by God? what is *the* one idea you have when you think of God, and which, if you dismiss from your mind, your idea is an idea about God no longer? It is just the idea of infinity, of incomprehensibility, of something amazing, utterly above you, beyond the grasp of your understanding. But we have just seen that God is most

of all glorious and amazing in his redeeming dominion over sinners. There his glory and his heart come out to the view of an adoring universe. And if, in the *mode* of this redemption, in this justification by grace through faith in this slain Christ, the eternal Son of God, there is something amazingly mysterious, is that any reason for discrediting it, or for being staggered at it? God, everywhere, is incomprehensible; whoever believes in a God at all, believes in an infinite mystery. And in the field where God's highest glory gleams, where he is most amazing, most—language fails; what shall I say?—most infinite—on that field shall we not expect something peculiar, something most of all wonderful, utterly above and beyond us? Whatever mystery there may be in this redemption of sinners by Christ's blood, the wonders of the *mode* correspond with the wonders of God's supreme glory. God is as much above me in Christ as he is above me in infinity; as infinitely beyond me in his condescension as he is beyond me in the essence of his glory, and in both he is precisely like himself—infinite, amazing, and incomprehensible forever! The mystery of the mode corresponds with the majesty of God, and therefore I can believe it. I have a question to ask you. Where, on what point, do you want God to be most like himself, most amazing, most above your reason and beyond it? to do the most wonderful thing for you? Just where you are a sinner—there, just there, you need God to come forth to you as you need him nowhere else. Very well, he has come; and *God manifest in the flesh* demands your faith in his blood, and defies your despair as a sinner. God's glory in redemption accords with your necessities as a sinner, and we marvel that every sinner in this assembly is not

constrained to approach God's Table to-day, exclaiming, None but Christ, none but Christ for me!

Allow me to say a word to you who neglect this Christ and this ordinance which honors him. I am astonished at you! I am painfully astonished! What do you mean? This Christ, this redemption, perfectly accord with sin, with death, with life and immortality, with God's grandeur, your graves, and your journey beyond them in the land of spirits. How can you reject such a Christ? how can you hesitate to believe in him? He is just what you need as you go to meet God and inhabit the world of spirits. He is just what the infinite God offers you; and the grace of the offer is linked with the very essence of his glory. Remember, then, I beseech you—remember what precious and needed grace you reject, and how greatly you offend God by the rejection. You dishonor his very heart—not only his authority, but the tenderness of his love, which is more dear to him! You will have to answer for this neglect and offence; you will not indeed be punished for violation of a covenant you never entered into, but you will be punished as ungrateful beings, not moved by the tenderest love of God towards you; you will be punished as hardened beings, madmen, who, sinking into the pit of perdition, knock away God's hand of mercy reached down to draw you out of it.

The more amazing the love, the more matchless and precious the grace of this redemption, the more affronting to God will be your rejection of them. The higher Christ would raise you, the deeper you will fall without him. Oh! remember, remember it well! He who is *declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resur-*

rection from the dead, holds in his hand an *iron sceptre* to *break his enemies, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel!— Why will ye die?* How can you bear to go up and stand at the judgment the rejectors of God's love, and your feet red with the blood of expiation you are *trampling under foot?*

Communicants, I have not time, nor you patience, for going back on this subject, and gathering up its substance to aid your hearts in the solemnities of this day. But suffer me a moment to congratulate you. I rejoice over you, if you are Christ's, more than if you had all the gold and splendor of a thousand worlds. You are rich. You are *heirs of a kingdom that cannot be moved.* The faith in the eternal Redeemer of sinners which you exercise is fixed on an immutable foundation. It is a faith which accords with all there is in you, in God, in sin, in death, in eternity and heaven!

You are sinners, unworthy, little in God's sight, worms of the dust. But Christ is yours; therefore everything is yours. *All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

There is nothing equal to the language you may take on your lips to-day as you approach God's waiting Table. *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. . . . I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he will stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. . . . Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. . . . I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. . . . I enter his banqueting-house,*

and his banner over me is love. . . . My soul shall be satisfied; I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green, he leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

He loved me, and gave himself a ransom for me.

And while these whispers of gratitude and faith and love are on your covenanting tongue, as you lift to your lips the Cup of blessing, your faithful God, who loved you, who redeemed you, who will keep you and love you for ever—that God, meeting you in the majesty of an infinite condescension, will say to you: *The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.* O God! so meet thy people, and so aid them to meet thee!

XXIII.

Christ made Perfect through Suffering.

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—HEBREWS ii. 10.

THIS text is uttered on the principle of an *existing propriety* in the production of consequences through means employed to produce them. Human intellect always acknowledges such a propriety. The human mind is so formed as to perceive, by a kind of intuition, that there is a fitness, a propriety, a reasonableness in having means adapted to the ends they aim after,—in employing instrumentalities, and choosing methods of procedure, appropriate to the designed effect.

We need not now inquire whether this is one of the original biases of mind, (as certainly it seems to be,) or whether it is a result of uniform experience. Such an experience belongs to every human being. From the playthings of infancy, through all the serious business of manhood, and down to the last glimmerings of intellect in old age, or the hour of death, there is a steady regard for the connection between causes and effects, and an unvarying conviction of the appropriateness of the one to the other. And whether the matters to be accomplished, and the means for their accomplishment,

be things which come within the choice of himself or of another, wherever man looks at results his mind will not regard them as mere accidents, causeless, and insusceptible of being reduced to any order. In contemplating his own work, his fellow's, or his God's, his mind will feel an approval or disapproval of the mind which planned it, in proportion as it beholds an adaptedness or a want of adaptedness in the chosen means for accomplishing it.

Man cannot, indeed, know every thing. His intellect is too little; his observation is too limited; his experience —just come, as he is, into this infancy of his existence— is too small. But when, so far as he *can* see, he beholds the demanded fitness between means and ends in any thing he contemplates, the perception of this tends to awaken his faith in the mind of him who planned the system before him, as that system dives into depths he cannot fathom, or stretches away into distances where he cannot follow. Perceiving the excellencies of it as far as he *can* go, prepares him to believe in the excellencies of it where he can *not* go; and just as surely as he is wise and has not abused and perverted his mind, he will not reject the system simply because it goes beyond him, but his knowledge of the justness of a part of it seen will tend to give him confidence in the justness of a part unseen. And when he has come up to a barrier which his mind cannot surmount, he will not so readily affirm that the system is false, as he will humbly confess that he is ignorant.

This insurmountable barrier will be found drawn across the intellectual pathway of every man who attempts to explore the depths of religion. There is a spot where he will be obliged to stop. God will go be-

yond him. God will be to him unfathomable, simply because he is God. But when it pleases God to teach him, and call his attention to the fact that God himself, in the system of redemption, has acted upon the very same principle of fitness, propriety, or adaptedness which the man's own understanding looks for, surely it becomes the man to examine the system as far as he is able; and if his reason approves it thus far, it becomes him to bow in humble faith before it when it stretches above and beyond his infant mind. That mind will not always be in its infancy, nor will it always be trammelled by the shackles and confined in the prison-house which here impede it. And when we shall have "shuffled off this mortal coil,"—when this prison of earth is exchanged for the freedom of eternity, and this infant mind has ripened into the manhood of a spirit's existence,—God will have lessons for that manhood, that immortality, and that spirit's intellectual and eternal progress. We may well be satisfied to have something for that other world to unfold to us.

But we must begin here. Let us carry these ideas along with us to the text.

The text affirms a definite propriety to exist in the great foundation of the Christian religion, *i. e.*, in one special and vital part of it. It says, *It became him* (*i. e.*, God) *to make the Captain of salvation perfect through sufferings.* We understand it to mean that there was, in the nature of the case, a propriety in this. And we understand that propriety to lie just here: that there should be a fit correspondence between the means of salvation and the end, between the *mode* of redemption for sinners and the redemption to be accomplished for them; and that this was found in the sufferings of Christ

On this idea we are going to address you, after we have briefly explained the clauses of the text—a matter which seems needful, in order to show that we are making a just use of it.

It became him in bringing many sons unto glory. Who are these sons? Men, believers. If any of the expressions of the New Testament startle you, seeming to imply that Christ did nothing except for believers, and has left the redemption of all but a few unprovided for, your fear may cease with the idea that the language which startles you is employed on the principle that none but believers will be saved by his work, and not on the principle that his work is insufficient to save all. The fourteenth verse of the chapter may aid your fear, and help to explain the text at the same moment: *Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Flesh and blood* means human nature. *Made like unto his brethren* means the same. The meaning is, that he took on himself a human body; in all respects, except sin, he became a man.

The text then asserts the reason for this incarnation; *i. e.*, to *make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.* Christ became incarnate in order to suffer; not for the sake of living, but for the sake of dying. It was not his life, but his laying it down, that made him *perfect—perfectly* qualified to be the *Captain of salvation*, and *bring many sons unto glory.* The sufferings and death of Christ are not mentioned here in any peculiar manner. They are named in just the ordinary style of the New Testament. Not to go beyond the chapter

before us, look again at the fourteenth verse. That affirms that Christ *took part of flesh and blood, that through death*—not by living, but by dying—*he might destroy him that had the power of death.* Look at the seventeenth verse. After making a significant discrimination in the sixteenth verse—*he took* NOT *on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham*—the apostle carefully states the *reason* for Christ's incarnation: *In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.* He became a man, not for the life of his humanity, but for its death. And in order that we might definitely understand what is the substance, the very life-matter of his priesthood, the apostle explains it, *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

There can therefore be no item of doubt that the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ constituted the main matter of his work; and that these were undergone by him for sinners,—to make reconciliation for sins, to make a sufficient expiation; and that his making this atonement by his sufferings and death was at once the purpose of his incarnation, and the *perfection* of his qualification in the mediatorial office.

We now call your attention to the propriety of these sufferings and this death. *It became him*, says the text; *It behooved him*, affirms the seventeenth verse; and the fourteenth implies the same. Hence we lay down this proposition: that

There is an appropriateness in the death of Jesus Christ to the *purposes* of that death, *i. e.*, an atonement for sinners, and their reconciliation to God and their salvation through his blood. Christ is fit for the faith

of sinners. *It became him, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

The propriety of this transaction may not all be discoverable by us here, and yet we here may learn the alphabet of a science whose depths eternity may be insufficient to explore. The expiation of sin and the salvation of sinners by the Son of God is a matter which has in it much that is beyond us; still we see enough to understand the emphatic *It became him*, in the text.

We name to you several distinct considerations taken from

I. The mysteriousness of the sacrifice.
II. The divine justice.
III. The creature to be ransomed.
IV. The manifestations of the divine character.
V. The nature and connections of guilt.
VI. The human conscience.
VII. The condition of sinners.

These are our topics. We enter upon them.

I. The first consideration is taken from that very mysteriousness which hangs around this whole matter. We could not spare that mysteriousness. Our religion would be unworthy of credit without it. When our reason staggers at it, it staggers unreasonably,—it staggers where it ought to stand firm. Examine it. This matter of redemption has respect to an unseen eternity. The harvest of bliss to be gathered there must have its seeds planted here. Our present relations are to be broken up. Friends are to be separated—families dissolved. Our bodies must crumble; and after our departure from this material world and the dissolution of

this material organism, we shall carry along with us only those more spiritual qualities which are adapted to our new abode. Affection, conscience, pure intellect, will survive the shock of death and the putrefaction of the tomb; but we shall have left behind us the materials and the capacities for much of our earthly felicity. In that coming world, (if grace saves us,) we are to stand in the presence of God. Angels are to be our companions—spirits, our fellows,—holiness, our eternal bliss. This is a new and strange matter to us.

Now, since even in all that here meets us we find a mysteriousness which we cannot fathom,—our bodies a mystery—our blood and bones mysteries to us—our atmosphere, our life, our sleep, our everything, having something about it which no human reason can explain,—what! shall we stop, and start back from the announcement of God about the satisfaction of the atonement, because it contains something beyond our reason? We want it to contain something. When God provides for even an earthly felicity, he employs the intervention of a thousand instrumentalities which we cannot understand. The wind that fans us is a mystery. The flowers that blush on our eye are a mystery. Our life itself is a mystery—no man can tell what it is. And when God is providing for our felicity in worlds and ages yet to be unfolded in that higher field of a spirit's bliss, shall we demand of him to abandon his rule of procedure, and, about that which is most great, invisible, and amazing, become more perspicuous and plain than he is in the little matters of our present life and present world? Shall God contradict himself? Shall he abandon his own analogies? Everywhere else, beyond us and above us, in his means of providing for us, the mo-

ment he steps off from this little and temporary theatre, and forms a plan and chooses means to provide for the high and interminable felicities of a coming eternity,—does it not *become him* to be at least equally above us and beyond us? And if we find him *more* so, and find in the sufferings of Christ a marvel of love and wisdom which we can not explore, let us remember that the plan there aims at two of the grandest ends in the universe,—God's boundless glory, and man's boundless bliss.

We do not apply this argument to the *sufferings* of Christ, specifically, and considered by themselves. We only design it to apply to the mysteriousness that exists in the matter of placing punishment upon an innocent being, and on account of his expiation pardoning the guilty. That economy is a hindrance to many minds. It ought to be a help. God ought to be consistent. It *becomes* him to be as marvellous and adorable in providing for our eternity, as he is in providing for us here.

But let us advance a step further.

II. The second consideration is taken from the divine justice.

The Bible everywhere represents the sufferings of Christ as having respect to divine justice,—a justice provoked by the sins of men. Christ died to redeem those that were under the curse—an infinite sacrifice for the infinite evil of sin. Divine justice accepts the substitute, and lets the guilty go free.

Now, our first consideration admonishes us that we cannot be reasonably staggered at the mystery of this transaction, and suggests the idea that it is not for us to tell what divine justice will permit, or not permit. And beyond this, we now affirm that there is a propriety in having divine justice honored in the salvation of sin

ners, and therefore a propriety that *somewhere* the retributiveness of its nature should be seen—the stroke of its offence should fall. It *did* fall upon a head willingly made bare to the blow! When the terrific voice of offended Deity burst forth from the Throne, *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow!* and all heaven stood aghast at the sound, from the lowly earth and out of the lips of the *man of sorrows* went up the voice, *Lo, I come to do thy will; in the volume of the book it is written of me.* Divine justice was satisfied, and man redeemed. There is an analogy between the divinity of the justiee, and the divinity of the victim. It *became him* to be *perfect through suffering.* But let us advanee a step further.

III. Our third consideration is taken from the creature to be ransomed. He was a man—a sinner. God could not suffer. He is the *ever-blessed God;* from his very nature as essentially, unchangeably happy, as he is self-existent and eternal. Christ became a man, not a sinner, for then no offering he could have made would have been worthy of God,—but he beeame a man. He became so, that he might be capable of suffering. There is an analogy between the humanity of the sinner and the humanity of the substitute. It *became him* to be not merely the happy Son of God, but the suffering *man of sorrows;—man*, the sinner, was to be ransomed.

Now we do not affirm that this arrangement involves nothing beyond human reason. On the contrary, we believe it to be one of those things which are eternally unfathomable to us, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.* But we dare affirm that this arrangement involves nothing

that contradicts reason, or implies any inconsistency. The items are these: Jesus Christ suffered as a man; and, doing so, was a substitute for sinners, who deserved to suffer, and made satisfaction to God, as God would maintain the honor and justice of the Deity. In the person of Jesus Christ the human nature was united to the divine nature, somewhat (if, indeed, we may venture upon a similitude) as the human body is united to the human soul in the person of an ordinary man. Christ was one person. His Deity was not his person; his humanity was not his person. Your soul is not your person; your body is not your person. It takes both to make up that being which you call *yourself.* And it took both Deity and humanity to make that one person Jesus Christ, who died upon the Cross. The Deity gave value to the sufferings of the humanity, somewhat (if we may venture another similitude) as we put value upon the body of a man, not as dust of the earth, from which it came and to which it will soon return, but as united to an intelligent and imperishable spirit.

In all this there is nothing to shock reason. God did not suffer. The suffering belonged to the human nature. Two natures were not confounded. They were distinct in one person. They were united; and from the dignity of the one resulted the fit offering to atone for sinners by the sufferings of the other. So far, then, as human reason can penetrate the depths of this matter, we perceive that when man, a sinner, was to be redeemed, *it became* the Redeemer to be *made perfect* through the sufferings of the nature he assumed. But we advance another step.

IV. The fourth consideration is taken from manifestations of the divine character. None but a novice

in religious study can be ignorant that the glory of God is to be secured by manifestations of himself to an intelligent universe, and that the felicity of sinful, intelligent beings must greatly depend on knowing God as he is, and being *changed into the same image from glory to glory*. The manifestation of one divine perfection is not enough. The others must appear. Not one must be eclipsed. We shall not fear God rightly, nor love him rightly, nor adore him rightly, if half his character is hidden behind a cloud.

Now there is no eclipse of any one of his perfections, no cloud to hide him, in the matter of Christ's atonement. Look at it. The innocent Jesus indeed suffered; but he did not suffer *as* innocent; he suffered as *loaded with the iniquity of us all*. He was sinless in himself, and deserved no suffering; but he took our law-place, and bore our law-penalty willingly, and drew not back when avenging justice held him to his pledge. His redeemed ones go free on account of his sacrifice; but his sacrifice and their free pardon do not encourage sin; their faith that justifies is a faith that sanctifies. Jesus Christ indeed sank into the arms of death as a substitute for sinners, but Jesus Christ came off victorious over death and the grave; and when he ascended up on high, the acclamations of heaven welcomed him: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.* Here are manifestations of the divine character. Love, reigning love and mercy, to begin with! Justice, but no injustice! A substitute, but a willing substitute! Blood poured out like water! but poured in love, and gaining, by the sacrifice, thousands and tens of thousands of ransomed sinners, who shall meet you, and

sing with you the glories of the *Lamb that was slain*, when your feet shall *stand on Mount Zion* above.

We do not now affirm that God could not pardon sinners, aside from any suffering to expiate their guilt, and, at the same time, make no just and happy manifestations of his character. But we confess we do not see *how* he could. And we confidently maintain that the sufferings of a dying Christ make such manifestations of his character as tend, most of all, to his glory, and our bliss in the admiration and love of him. We fearlessly maintain that it *became him* to honor his justice in connection with his goodness; to act in a mode to keep offenders in awe, while he acted to save the offending; to furnish an indubitable proof of his abhorrence of sin, in the very act of pardoning a sinner. All this he has done. *It became him, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

We advance another step.

V. The fifth consideration is taken from the nature and connections of guilt. The creature to be redeemed by Christ's sufferings was a guilty sinner. He deserved punishment—deserved to suffer. He must have suffered for ever if Christ had not suffered for him. Christ's death was the means for *bringing him to glory.*

Now, we lay down this principle: that there is a fitness of means to ends to be regarded everywhere, and which is regarded everywhere else by God, and by man as far as his wisdom reaches. What, then, shall be the means to bring help to the catastrophe of sin? If there is before you a catastrophe of sin or folly, you bring to it, if you can, the resources of wisdom. By an applied wisdom in the case, you aim to retrieve the calamities

of folly. If there is before you a catastrophe of weakness, you bring to it the resources of strength. To a calamity of darkness, you apply light; to a calamity of poverty, you bring the resources of wealth; to a calamity of hunger, you give bread. You never think of crossing the track of this principle, nor of interchanging these means. The means must meet the case. You would not give a moral lecture to a man fallen into a gulf in order to help him out; nor apply any of the mechanical powers to comfort the heart of a mourner. There must be a correspondence between the end aimed after and the means to compass it.

What, then, is the resource which must be brought to guilt? to the catastrophe or calamity of a sinner? What is there that assorts with guilt? What does guilt deserve? what shall meet its want? what recover from its calamity? Just *suffering*—nothing but *suffering*. That is the necessary, appropriate, and demanded resource, as much as strength for weakness, or wisdom for folly, or bread for hunger. The sinner's case is just a case of guilt; and suffering ALONE can help him. If Christ does not suffer for him, he must suffer himself, for ever. His guilt connects him with this. It binds him over to the wrath of God and the pit of hell! The nature of guilt, and its connections, demand the resource of a suffering deliverance. *It became* Christ to be *perfect through sufferings.* And

VI. The conscience. Conscience within a sinner makes him feel that he deserves to suffer. Sometimes it *makes* him suffer, and his wounded spirit writhes under the idea of guilt, as if he felt within him the incipient gnawings of the *worm that dieth not*, and the scorchings of the *fire that is never quenched.* And see the whole

history of conscience! see how it has acted and what it has done in every land that sin ever visited! It has just resorted to suffering for some hoped-for pacification. It has poured out blood from its ten thousands of victims. It has struggled, and struggled, to find a victim costly and precious enough. It has gone from the death of the beast to the death of the child, and stopped at nothing which by suffering could seem to meet the want of the *sin of the soul.* And never, no, never was conscience pacified till it had reached a victim beyond which guilt could not reach. *It became him, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through* SUFFERINGS.

Human conscience has been misled, indeed, amid the ignorance of heathenism; but it has been *conscience* still. It has worked like conscience: and, doing so, it has invariably looked to *suffering* as the only hope for guilt. Punishment, penalty somewhere, is the only thing which assorts with the guilt and want of a sinner. A suffering Christ is fitting to us, to our conscience, condition, and prospects. Sin is an infinite evil. It stains the soul. It taints earth. Armies of human beings are its visible trophies, as death follows in its train. It makes the world a graveyard. It cuts us off from God. It uncovers the pit. And shall there be no correspondence between the thing and its remedy? If we can trust our Bible, our eyes, our hearts, our conscience, sin is a most terrifying evil. Shall God pass it over lightly, or only with these earthly frowns? Ah! these earthly frowns are only tokens;—more, they reach the most virtuous as surely as the most vicious.

No! no! there must be a correspondence between guilt and its relief; and that correspondence, too, ought

to be of such a nature that we can see the magnitude of the one standing over against the magnitude of the other—the wonder of the means assorting with the wonder of the end. When God would give us light, he kindles the eternal ball that burns in our skies; when he would purify the air we breathe, thunders bellow and lightnings leap in their dreadful play. That we may understand him, mind, an unseen mystery within us, must come into being. So of all else. And to redeem us, we have lifted up before our eyes, in the person of Emmanuel, a being able to cope with all the difficulties of our redemption—with all the evils of sin, as its dreadful tokens are scattered around us—with all the evil there *can be* against us in the offended mind of an infinite God, or in the kindling flames of unquenchable fire. He has just met our case—our desert of suffering. He *cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah . . . travelling in the greatness of his strength. It became him to be made perfect through sufferings.*

VII. The final consideration is taken from the condition of those whom he came to relieve. It is a condition of *suffering*. This earthly suffering is only a token. If Christ had not suffered, I do not see how we could well have trusted in him. If he had come in splendor, and lived here in bliss, what would have persuaded us that he really loved and pitied us? Ah! our *Friend!* shall *he* laugh while we sinners weep? shall *he* live while we sinners die? Shall *he* go along a little way with us in our pathway of tears, and stop short as the darkness thickens, and the glooms of death begin to gather around our sightless eye-balls? Oh! does not our heart look for him, and our soul want him to go the whole way with us, and, as far as any of our own

evils must extend, desire to have his own footprints in the path we must tread? He has done it—he has done it! He took the last step when he plunged into the horrors of death. He grappled with our last enemy. He overthrew him in the conflict. And now, as our friends, one after another, die in our arms, they exclaim, *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*, and are away, on the wings of angels, to the bosom of God.

This is what we want. We want Christ to traverse the whole field of our sufferings, which had their origin in sin, nor leave a spot unsprinkled with his tears and blood. His humiliation stopped, and his tears began, just where they should have done. He came to redeem sinners from earth, and in this lifetime of God's merciful forbearance. And if it had been so that *after* this lifetime, or out of this world, sinners were to be redeemed by him, or if any part of their redemption were to be in some purgatory or intermediate state, his humiliation would not have stopped at the tomb. He would have gone beyond it, and on the domains of eternity, and in his dark prison-house, would have grappled with the prince of hell! But such was not his mission. His field was earth; his path the path of sinners. His work extended to the very last spot where any human woes need extend; and when death was finishing his work upon him, he was finishing his own, and exclaimed, in the majesty of dying innocence, *It is finished!* and *gave up the ghost.*

And while evils are here, and are constantly thronging in upon us, and the last, if not the worst of them, is soon to come, do we not need here, and shall we not need in the hour of the last conflict, to know

(and know it well) that our friend has traversed the whole journey, and set up his signals of compassion and mercy all along down to the mouth of the tomb? He has planted them *there*. He is risen. His tomb is empty. He has gone to *appear in the presence of God for us*. *The Captain of our salvation is made perfect through sufferings.*

Here human reason must stop. She can only see that *it became* Christ to *suffer*, and find that no complaining can be uttered against God's declarations that he was *made a curse for us*—that he died to *make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. But beyond this there may be much that we cannot fathom. Our faith must follow where our eyes cannot reach. Our Redeemer is our God; and we can well afford to have him adorably infinite and adorably incomprehensible.

As you memorialize the *sufferings* which made your Redeemer a perfect Redeemer, aim to-day to feel the full appropriateness of his death. He died for you. For you he trod the wine-press of the wrath of God! you, a diminutive creature, a guilty being, a breath, a worm of the dust, a sinner on the highway to hell! You were exposed to infinite horrors; but he loved you; and though he could not save you but by fighting his way to your recovery through the flames of wrath that kindled upon him, yet he did not hesitate. With a *soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, and with the blood-sweat streaming from his body in the agony of the garden, he gave not back. He met the last item, and satisfied the Father *for you.*

And after all this, can you distrust him? Is there anything, or can there be anything, in the depths of your guilt, to make you afraid? You see how it is.

God is an affectionate being. His character is goodness and mercy; and his promise is pledged to you, in that blood in whose memorial Cup you are to-day invited, as Christians, to pledge yourselves to him. Come to it, then, freely, in an humble and adoring confidence, and, as Christ has given you his life, give him your heart, your soul.

And if Christ has triumphed over the guilt of the past, so is he prepared to triumph, *in you*, over the terrors of the future. The future *has* terrors. We do not attempt to hide them. The time is coming when the dart of death shall be lifted against you. You must grapple with the king of terrors. But Christ *died that he might destroy him that had the power of death—that is, the devil.* If you *believe*, you shall *see the salvation of God.* Death cannot hurt you. The grave cannot hold you. Hell cannot claim you. As your breath stops, heaven shall open upon your sight. Jesus Christ shall appear. He *will come again*, and claim his ransomed child; and, mounting with your immortal spirit to the skies, you will hear him saying, *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.* Fear not then for the future. Your *Captain of salvation* is *perfect.* He has traversed the whole field of evil *for you*, and is prepared to transform the bed of death into a field of victory. He will take you home to his *house of many mansions.* In that sweet hope, memorialize his death. AMEN!

XXIV.

Christ made under the Law to Redeem.

"When we were children we were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—GAL. iv. 3-5

TO be a believer is one thing, and to be an unbeliever is quite another. To state this, and to explain the difference betwixt the two, is the ordinary and impressive mode in which religion is taught in the New Testament. The statement and explanation bear alike upon believers and unbelievers. They tend to the conviction and alarm of unbelievers, and to the holiness of believers, by instructing them in truth and confirming their faith.

And it is remarkable how tenaciously the divine writers have adhered, through all their pages, to such arguments, facts, and explanations as have an immediate connection with some matter of faith; and how seldom they have drawn a caution or a comfort from any other quarter. Evidently they design to have us something more than naturalists, and something more than philosophers: they design to have us *believers*, and to have *faith* in *us* take the place of the principles which captivate

and control other men. They would have each one of us say, simply, "I believe, because God has said it; I act, because God bids me; I am comforted, because God smiles on me."

The verses which we have read to you, and all their context, constitute an example of this adherence to matters of mere faith. Turn to the twenty-second verse of the previous chapter, and read to the twenty-sixth, and you will understand the great truth which the apostle was here setting forth. *The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* This implies a difference between the state of an unbeliever under the Law and its condemnatory sentence upon him, and the state of the believer under the fearful penalty of the Law no longer. *Wherefore the law* (not the light of nature, not unaided reason)—*the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* This clearly expresses a difference betwixt a believer and an unbeliever, and just as clearly states the way of a believer's benefit; he is *justified by faith*—he is a *child of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

This same matter the apostle speaks of in our text; and he speaks of it in the same manner, that is, urging us to receive it by simple faith, and not on any ground of ordinary science. He explains these matters of faith a little further, stating some particulars of the mode in which this adorable redemption for sinners was brought about, and what it had conferred upon them. *We were*

in bondage once, *under the elements of the world:* that is one side of the contrast, and an apt description of an unbeliever—*under the elements of the world.* The world rules him, and cannot purify or comfort him. *But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* This is the other side of the contrast, and it leads on fitly to the mention of a believer's spirit; *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

Every one of the particular ideas of these verses is just an idea addressed to faith, not to any independent principles of judgment; and you cannot be benefited by any one of them in any other mode than by a believing reception of it.

We shall have little time to do anything more than explain them. We cannot expatiate or enforce. We omit all ardor and declamation in order simply to teach.

I. *When the fulness of time was come.* This expression is employed to denote the *fitness* of the period at which Jesus Christ appeared on earth. It was at the *fulness of time.*

He did *not* appear as soon as there were sinners to be redeemed. Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, their flowers withered, their sweet paradise was blighted and blasted, and the breezes of its health became loaded with the poison of death, and the sinning exiles from it trod among thorns, and thistles sprung up in their path from the *cursed earth;* they lived and died; and four thousand years wore tediously away, and took all their generations down to the grave, before Jesus Christ came to do his work of redemption.

We cannot tell why he waited so long. God has not taught us. If man were left to fix on the fit time for Christ's coming, probably he would think he ought to have come at the first pang of sin; or, at any rate, as soon as the first death-bed was prepared for sin's victim. He would very likely have a strong idea that it did not become Christ, his character, or his work, to linger for four thousand years in heaven, a mere spectator of so much sorrow and so many death-beds, before he descended to his work. But so it was. Centuries went down to night, and still he lingered. His people, indeed, could lay their dying heads on the pillow of the promises, but they could not be soothed and comforted by the known fulfilment.

But whatever may have been the inscrutably wise reasons for this lapse of ages betwixt the fall and the crucifixion, the time was now come when all these hidden reasons had been answered.

It was *the fulness of time*, because it was the period foretold by the prophets (whatever may have been God's motives for the delay, and the making such prophecies needful).

Imperfect as may have been the understanding of these prophecies, there was, at least, a general expectation of the appearance of the Messiah on earth, about the time of his birth. The Jews were looking for his advent. They expected some important personage,—a great Deliverer. As the time drew near, the expectation grew more anxious and animating. It had become so general and exciting that base men took advantage of it, and for political reasons some impostors, like Theudas, claimed to be the promised Messiah. At the time of John the Baptist the question was put to him, *Art thou he that should come, or must we look for another?*

The prophecies which created this expectation were many and various, and given under various circumstances, but I believe they were in every case given for the comforting of God's people.

When the second temple was built, some old men still survived who had seen the glitter and the golden splendor of the former temple, reared in the prosperous times of Solomon, and the recollection made them sad. This second temple was mean in comparison. It seemed to the old men that God's favor was not restored to them after all. A prophet was sent to instruct and comfort them. Dry your tears, said Haggai; ye do err in your estimation of this temple. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.* Jesus Christ was to preach in it. *The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.*

God could have given to it his silver and his gold, but he would have the old men know that he would give it something more valuable. The *Desire of all nations* should come to it: *In this place will I give peace.* He did come. There, in that place, Jesus Christ preached peace to sinners, and the prophecy was fulfilled. He was promised as one to come to that temple, and be the glory of it, before, in any conflict of nations, it should be destroyed. He came there: he preached there: the prophecy was fulfilled.

When old Jacob approached his end, he comforted his children by a similar promise. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* The kingdom of Judah was now shaken. The sceptre was about to fall from the feeble grasp of its monarch. Christ came at the exact period to fulfil this promise; and it was, therefore, the *fulness of time.*

Precisely the same thing may be said of any prophecy respecting Christ, which contains any intimation in reference to the period of his advent. His advent agreed with the *seventy weeks* of Daniel.

The history of mankind plainly shows that there is, under certain limitations, an advance in the human mind as one generation succeeds another. The tendency is onwards, whatever particular and dark exceptions there may be, coming from the disasters of wars or the prevalence of vices. In the infancy of the race, little progress had been made in civilization and refinement. Christ did *not* come till that period had arrived when men were qualified to test the claims of his religion. They were advanced in philosophy and the arts, in law and other sciences; and accustomed to the severest exercises of the reasoning powers. The most profound and splendid geniuses that have ever lived had already graced the annals of our race, and accomplished such wonders as the world cannot now equal. All human kind have not now, by their embodied science and skill, the ability to build such a temple as that of Jerusalem, or to set up such obelisks as those of Egypt: nor have we had in our subsequent centuries any man who could rival Homer in song, or Aristotle in reasoning, or cast ancient oratory into the shade, or give an additional

trait of sublimity or beauty to architecture. So true is this, that by the common consent of civilized mankind the nearer any of our works come to those of these ancient masters, the more they are entitled to be deemed excellent.

Christ was not to remain on earth always. If he had come in the infant, or in an ignorant age of the world, had set up his religion and departed from among men, future generations might have supposed that the age in which he lived had received it by an ignorant and superstitious credulity, alike unable and indisposed to test it. This cannot now be pretended. He came amidst a blaze of genius that shone the world over. The reasoning powers of man were then cultivated to an extent yet unrivalled.

And, what is particularly to be remarked, he did not set up his religion among men in a manner to conciliate human reason, so much as to shame and confound it. His mother was a poor virgin. His reputed father was a poor man. He chose his aids from among poor fishermen. He was not indebted to power or science. And it was just one of the natural questions of human reason, when it was asked, *Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him.* The question also shows the temper of the age to examine and prove everything. It was not a credulous, but on the contrary, a peculiarly incredulous age. Men were disposed, by habit as well as by inclination, to disbelieve anything that claimed to be religious, unless it allowed everything licentious. They would disbelieve their own eyes when they saw Christ's miracles, rather than admit his divine mission. To establish a false religion in such an age would have been an impossibility.

Such an age was the best qualified of any age the world has ever seen, to put to the test a true religion. It was tested by reason, by authority, by infidelity, by power, by prejudice, by passion, by pride, by stripes, bonds, imprisonment and death. In all these tests, it stood. Through all these disadvantages it made its way.

The all-wise God chose such an age of the world for the mission and crucifixion of Christ. All future generations, down to the end of time, may now know that Christianity was not born in credulity, that it did not come stealthily upon the world in a night of ignorance, that there never has been and never could be an age since the sun shone, wherein it could have been introduced with more to test its character, and by that test commend it to all future generations. *The fulness of time had come.*

II. *God sent forth his Son.* His Son had existed before. He was eternal. He was no great personage, raised up for the occasion, and therefore to be considered as coming within those ordinary acts of Providence by which God manages his world. Here was something more—something peculiar—something unparalleled, and having no shadow of analogy among all the other works of God. The Father SENT him. No sinner's supplication had made the request. No power of reason, no energy of hope or despair, had contrived the mode of redemption. He came by the overflowings of God's love toward the guilty, to realize to a waiting world all that had been wrapped up for so many ages in the dark significance of the mystic promises.

He had been on earth before. He talked with Adam. He talked with Moses on the mount. He talked with

the ancient prophets as they rose in their successive generations. But all that would not do. He then gave promises and covenants and comforts; and now he must pay the ransom on which all his former promises and covenants and comforts were founded. Hence, the next clause of this text.

III. He was *made of a woman.* Before this, he was the eternal Son of God; but before this, he bore no peculiar relation to the human race. He was not one of them. He was divine only. But he became one of them. His conception was a miracle. The angel who saluted the virgin declared unto her, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

The manner and frequency with which this matter is referred to in the sacred writings, appears to indicate, very clearly, that an amazing amount of importance is attached to it in the accomplishment of redemption for sinners. He was *made of a woman*, but he was no common man. His birth was a miracle. He humbled himself to be the son of Mary—the babe of Bethlehem. This, his incorporation into the human family, is most solemnly mentioned, or indicated in some manner, throughout the whole inspired history of our redemption. It formed the point which sweetened the first promise made to the sinning woman. Satan had deceived her. She fell. God said to her deceiver, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman*, (a declaration verified from that day to this; woman being the most uncompromising enemy of Satan, more ready to come to Christ than her husband or her brother, and more frequently and believingly found at the com-

munion-table than the other sex,) *and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head.* It was the *seed of the woman*, (which is Christ,) not the seed of the man, which should *bruise the head* of the serpent.

The same peculiar idea was given to the prophets. *Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.*

St. Paul has the same idea in a passage so often misunderstood, wherein he compares Adam and Eve to the disadvantage of the woman, at first, and then throws in the compensating idea that Christ was *made of a woman. Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved by child-bearing*,—through the human birth of a divine Saviour—because a Saviour has been born of a woman,—saved, not by or from any pains peculiar to her sex,—saved, *if they continue in faith and charity and holiness, with sobriety.* Such faith and love do not exempt her from pains incident to her sex, but they do unite her to that divine Redeemer who was *made of a woman.* And this puts the sense of the expression beyond all question. The condition of the named salvation is faith and charity and holiness, and these do save, through a Saviour born; they save from punishment of sin, if not from pain. Woman had been first in the transgression; God would make her the honored instrument of a glorious recovery. The apostle was not adverting to any mere temporal affair. He had just contrasted Adam and Eve in their fall, much to the woman's disadvantage, and the mention of any temporal affair peculiar to her would be forced and unnatural in such a case, and would by no means form any balancing to the introduction of sin into the world. It would not carry out,

therefore, what the apostle evidently designed. He intended to throw in a compensating and comforting idea in respect to the woman. If she had been first in the transgression, she had been the means of uniting with human nature that glorious Messiah through whom recovery from the fall is accomplished.

The miraculous birth of Jesus Christ showed him to be in his human nature an immediate production of God, and put an inconceivable difference and distance betwixt him and all other human beings. He came into existence here as no other being ever did. He was born without sin. His being born of a woman made him one of the race he came to redeem, and it qualified him to endure such agonies as otherwise could not have been endured—to be *made perfect through sufferings, as the Captain of our salvation.* He took human nature, sinless, and, in the conflict, sustained by all the majesty of the Godhead within him,—the Son of God,—he could make his way through all the obstacles, and over all the barriers interposed between man and heaven by that strange monster, sin. *Made of a woman*, he could sympathize with all the sorrows of human nature, and in that nature which had sinned he could bear the dread penalty of sin, and thus work out a way for our lost race back into the favor of God.

He was made under the law. This was as much an exception and a miracle as his birth. By his divine nature he was above the law. By his incarnation he put himself under it. All other human beings, yea, all other moral beings in the wide universe of God, are under the law by their nature; he was *made under* it by his condescension. He observed it. And his spotless innocence is an unassailable demonstration that the pains

of death he endured could not be appropriate to himself, but must have been for those he came to redeem. Death was the penalty of sin, and there is something abhorrent to all our ideas of propriety that a sinless being should be condemned to it, and suffer it on his own account. But he *was made under it.* He was *made under it* for us. He stood in our law-place and took our law-exposures and endured our law-penalties. He came into the world for the purpose of dying. He *was made*, not for joy, but for sorrow; not for power, but for poverty; not for delight, but for death.

All along he kept his death in view, and he never viewed it but with such amazement and horror as certainly are inappropriate for a sinless being, steadily conscious of the favor of God. Ah! he was *slain for us.* He wept that we might rejoice. He died *that we might live.* Hence, the text adds,

V. *To redeem them that were under the law.*

With man, ever since the fall, there is no difference betwixt being under the law and being under the curse. The law has been broken by every human being capable of knowing good from evil, and he stands solemnly and awfully accountable to it, unless redemption has released him. And whatever may be his fears, or his compunctions and resolutions, every descendant of Adam carries with him the awful power of a corrupt nature, which will still urge him forward to renewed acts of rebellion against God and more dreadful stages of sin, unless he attains a redemption from its power along with a redemption from its penalty. But Christ hath redeemed us from the *curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*

Just on this ground, I cannot wonder any longer at

the peace and joy of believers, and cannot but wonder at the unbelief of so many who reject Christ. The case stands thus: Man was under the heavy curse of law. Infinite love interposed for him (as it need *not* have done) by its own sovereign will, and by its own promptings. By a sovereign act, it sent forth God's eternal Son, and in the exercise of the same arbitrary sovereignty, it *made him of a woman, and made him under the law*, whose claim he met and whose curse he bore. It was for us he lived a human being; for us he obeyed the law; for us he suffered and died. And since he was such a being, and did such things, and on such authority, I marvel that every sinner cannot see that the character and government of God have been completely vindicated; that the law has received all it can claim; that nothing less could possibly be the effect of Christ's work than the full procurement of justification and eternal salvation for all sincere believers.

And I do not marvel that on this ground, and just by faith in it, a sinner, a believing sinner, can *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, while he surveys the platform on which he expects blessings that he cannot comprehend, but which must be commensurate with the infinite dignity of the dying achievement of that Son of God who has procured them. And on the other hand, and for the same reasons, I cannot but marvel with an inexpressible amazement, that any reasonable creature should not see that here, just in this work of Christ's received redemption, there is, and must be, precisely the aid which his sinful and perilled soul needs. God himself hath done his work on purpose for him—unconstrained, except by his sovereign and adorable love. He hath done it by putting his own Son into the sinner's

very nature,—flesh and blood and tears and death,—to show that God's love will pursue him anywhere this side of hell;—and hath done it, too, by putting this his Son *under the law*, and letting the law loose upon him, to demand and obtain at his hands and his heart's blood all it could ever demand of the wickedest sinner that ever breathed on this side of the burning lake! Strange, inconceivably strange, that the sinner does not see that this purchased redemption meets his condition and his curse at once; and that he must be welcome to it, for God has done it on purpose for him; *to redeem them that are under the law.*

Suffer me, my unconverted friends, to beseech you to remember that if you are under the law, you are therefore under the curse. In respect to your immortal souls you cannot separate law and curse in any way except by this redeeming Christ. All nature, all reason, all research and philosophy, cannot give you, as accountable and immortal creatures, one whisper of peace. To you, my dear friends, the grave will continue dark as midnight, the throne of God's eternal judgment will be clothed in terrors inconceivable, and the cloud of the CURSE will hang, black and dread, over all eternity, unless you accept deliverance as God has provided it. There is no medium between being in a state of law-curse and condemnation, and being in a state of justification unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. You are now, at this instant, in one of these states or the other.

If you are an unbeliever, let me beseech you to remember that, being under the law, the wrath of God abides upon you as long as you are under it; it hangs over you, at home and abroad, in joy and in sorrow, in solitude and in society, in life and in death, in every pos-

sible condition of your existence. Oh! you must meet the coming storm! It is already gathered, full of all the elements and materials of misery and despair; and sooner or later it will burst upon you. It is coming nearer and nearer; and though you may now be happy in life and hope, in a single hour you may be dead, for aught you know; and then farewell for you, an eternal farewell, to all happiness and all hope!

And remember, too, I beseech you, that you are in this dreadful condition, under the curse of the law, not necessarily, not unavoidably, not because God wills it, not because he is severe; but simply because you have not accepted his Son by faith, but have heard this love-message of God's redemption, and seen this love-death of Jesus Christ, unbelieving and unmoved. And I do thank my God that these lips may testify to you once more, that you may, if you will, escape from all the horrors that the law-curse can hang over you. You may, if you will, have pardon, and comfort, and bright and sure prospect of inestimable treasures of blessedness, and a glorious immortality beyond death. And all you have to do to put away that midnight of horrors I have mentioned, and to come out into the clear noonday of peace and happiness and hope immortal, is just to forsake sin in reasonable penitence, and believe in that Son of God, and trust him who *was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.*

You need not perish. In the name of the God of grace *who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ*, I offer you that sonship, and all its eternal blessings. Welcome, welcome to it, every sinner here that wants it!

VI. Some of you, my hearers, have received this adoption of soul. You come to-day to the children's place. You will take the bread, and with ineffable humility and happiness you will say, Grace reigns! Christ's righteousness is my righteousness. He hath redeemed me from the *curse of the law.* You will lift the Cup, and you will exclaim,

> "His blood redeemed my guilty soul;
> On him I all my burdens roll."

I was an alien and an enemy; Christ hath made me a son and a friend.

Cultivate this disposition. It is an explanation of the text—*the adoption of sons.* By Christ's work, believers have not only entire justification from the curse of the law, but also the privileges of adoption; and a higher and more blissful inheritance, and a more intimate and endearing relation to God than if they had never been sinners. Come! take the children's portion, ye sons and daughters of Almighty God! Call God your Father. Take him as such, through Jesus Christ, and then hope everything and fear nothing. *All things are yours.*

> "Oh! fear not for death, but triumph the rather,
> To think of the promise, the prayer of the Lamb.
> Your joy shall be full—and, I will, oh! my Father,
> That those whom thou giv'st me may be where I am.

> "His own sacred lips the assurance have given—
> Believe on your God, on your Saviour believe;
> I go to prepare you a mansion in heaven,
> And quickly returning my own will receive

"In rapture unsated, in glory unclouded,
Ye shall rest before God with the angels of light,
Till this form of corruption, from darkness unshrouded,
Shall rise at the trumpet, with the soul to unite."

Because, *when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,—made under the law,—to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

XXV.

Increased Confidence by Believing.

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."—1 John v. 19, 20.

THE mode in which we propose to deal with this text is that mode with which you are the most familiar. You have become familiar with it because we have deemed it most profitable and safe. The *language* of the sacred scriptures deserves a special explanation; and beyond this, the great thoughts and themes announced in them demand, for our improvement, extensive discussion. Therefore we propose, first, to examine the clauses of this text; and, having thus attained some conception of its particulars, we shall then attempt to unfold more fully the great thoughts it contains.

I. We enter upon the *explanations.*

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. The idea here is that of comparison, or rather, contrast, between Christian people and the rest of the world. We *are of God.* The apostle means believers, Christians. *They* are *of God* because they are of the truth, and not only so, but because they have been

chosen of God and called by an "effectual calling" into God's holy family. They are the sons and daughters of God Almighty. I have thought, a great many times, (and thought it painfully and with shame and tears,) what a difference there is between us and the early Christians in respect to the spirit of adoption. *They* felt that they were God's children. *We* scarcely dare call ourselves such. With the temper of his own family, they approached without a doubt, without a misgiving or a fear. Where we linger and hesitate and reluctate and examine, they went straight forward into their Father's house, with a child's confidence and a child's felicity. They *felt* that they were redeemed, adopted,—*we are of God.* Happier for us if we could feel so. It would gild many a dark day, and dry up many a bitter tear. Nothing hinders it but a feeble faith and the dampened love of a distant heart.

In contrast with a Christian's condition is that of the rest of mankind,—*the whole world lieth in wickedness.* Christianity leads to holiness, and holiness is the family-mark of God's children, whereby they are distinguished from unconverted sinners. Though this holiness is imperfect, it is real; and though the wickedness of the wicked may become worse than it is now, yet they have no trait of holiness, and never will till they are born again. They live in wickedness. They are not *of God.* There is a vast difference between them and God's people, and a vast difference between the tendencies of the two; the one tending to deeper degrees of sin, and the other to an increasing resemblance to God.

We know that the Son of God is come. The expectancy of the Church from the time when God made his first promise to sinning man, all through the centuries of

patriarchs and prophets, and down to the birth of Christ, had been on the lookout for the Messiah. Men saw *as through a glass darkly.* They did not know as we know. The prophecies that pointed to Christ and promised him, were obscure. But still they expected the Messiah, whoever he might be, or in whatever wonderful form he should appear. They longed for his appearing. And there was to them something lacking as the source of full joy and peace, until the time when the aged Simeon took the Child in his arms, the last doubt gone, and the last want met,—*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* The text (as was most natural in that age) has respect to ancient expectancy. *We know that the Son of God is come.* The world might not know it—might not believe it—might have their unbelieving thoughts directed to some other quarter for the correction of the world's wickedness, and for the redemption of sinners; but believers had their thoughts directed only to Christ as founding a religion which should secure the redemption of the soul, and which should finally recover the world from the *wickedness* in which it lay in its pollution and shame. I do not recollect a single passage in the Bible wherein the least hope for individual sinners, or the least hope for the improvement of a wicked world, is founded upon any progress in art, or science, or refinement, or taste, or human government, or anything aside from the Son of God. On this side of the river of death as well as on the other, human expectancy of good must turn only to the *Son of God* who *is come*, or it must be disappointed. Philosophy can not reform this wicked world. Philosophy can not regenerate a sinner.

And hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. The *Son of God* hath done this. He is said to have given to believers *an understanding.* Unbelievers are not here spoken of. Believers have an understanding given to them which is peculiar to themselves. They are enlightened. Christ hath enlightened them by his Word and by his Spirit. Every man on earth, who would have anything like a just understanding of salvation, its plan, or its appropriateness, lies under the indispensable necessity of two things,—a reception of God's Word to teach him, and dependence on God's Spirit, to enable him to be taught. By these he may have such an *understanding*, the gift of the Son of God to those who *deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Jesus Christ.* A right *understanding* is Christ's gift to his people. A misguided understanding is one of the disasters of sin; an awful disaster! Unconverted sinners do not *know when good cometh*,—where it lieth,—what it shall profit them,—nor how to reach it. Their hearts, their corrupt hearts, have *darkened* their understanding; and again and again, in the deep and dreadful sincerity of a darling error, they *compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, and walk in the light of their own fire*, only to stumble in darkness!

The *understanding* which the Son of God hath given to his people hath one particular good in itself exclusive of all others:—*that we may know him that is true.* This means knowing Christ. Of course it includes knowing the Father through him. There is no way of knowing God correctly but by knowing Christ believingly, trustingly, lovingly. To an unconverted man you may descant upon God till doomsday, and you can

not make him understand him. You may cause all God's attributes to pass before him in the full blaze of their infinity; you may unfold to him God's excellencies, his works, his promises, all his goodness, and all his grace,—but, though you have made him see something of God, and see it correctly, still he does *not* understand God; still there is an obscurity and gloom and mistiness and uncertainty hanging around him; still there is a glory and a goodness in God which he knows nothing about. Why does he not *anoint* his eyes with *eye-salve* that he may see? why does he not come to the light? The reason, the sole reason why you cannot make an unconverted sinner know God correctly is, that he studies God as a mere spectator or scholar,—as an observer would study him who should stand afar off, and look on merely to speculate and wonder. God can not be known thus. A stranger can not know him. You must go home to his house, and see him amid his family, and become one of his children in Christ Jesus, before you can *know* him. God does not exist merely to be looked at. He cannot be known thus. He is to be known by being obeyed and trusted in and loved; by abandoning wickedness, and letting the *heart* learn God by reposing on him.

Let it not be overlooked, nor ever forgotten, that it is Jesus Christ who *hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true.* None can *know the Father* rightly *but by the Son. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ.* Distant, cold, inaccessible, wrapped in uncertainty if not in severity and terror, will God appear to man, if man will not view him and approach him in the way of the great atonement. *Jesus Christ* makes us *know* God.

And we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ. There is a primary sense in which we are said to be *in* Christ, and there are several subordinate senses which result from it. The primary sense is that of justification through faith in him. St. Paul alludes to this when he says, *That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.* God accepted Jesus Christ in his redeeming work, and by that acceptance he accepted all Christ's redeemed ones. They were *in him. Because he lives, they shall live also.* Faith in Christ makes a believer righteous because Christ is righteous, and the law can no more touch him than it can touch his Master. The subordinate senses are those of adoption, growth, joy, dependence, and so on. We are in him, if we are Christians, as the branch is united to the vine —to live by his life, and receive from his fulness.

This is the true God, and eternal life. Whether this expression proves what is proved in so many other passages of scripture, the Deity of Christ, I do not now propose to inquire. It surely seems like it. *This is the true God,* is a precise expression. And I suppose the idea of St. John is, that believers have the privilege of carrying their confidence forward into eternity, and being assured of *eternal life,* just as well as they are assured of the other facts of religion.

To convince you of this, I call your attention to two things which I passed over as I gave you these explanations. The one is, the repeated expressions of confidence which the text contains. The idea runs all through it. *We know that we are of God; we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding . . . we are in him . . . this is the true God.* Probably you

could coin no phrases which would express a more perfect assurance.

The other thing is the writer's reference to truth. He makes it repeatedly:—*That we may know him that is true,—we are in him that is true,—this is the true God.* These affirmations express St. John's perfect confidence in the truth of Christianity. He had a double confidence: one part of it was personal, whereby he had the *full assurance of hope;* the other was operative upon the system of Christianity, whereby he had a full assurance of its truth. But these two were blended together. They mutually aided each other. Especially the persuasion which arose from personal religion (I wish you to notice this idea, because I am going to carry it through all the rest of this sermon) became very powerful, and, as a Christian, he was enabled to say, *We know that we are of God; we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

This introduces us to the

II. Object of this sermon: to unfold one main idea which the text expresses,—that a believer has, or may have, an increased and fixed confidence in the truth of his religion resulting from the fact that he *is* a believer; and that, though there are proofs enough to convince any candid mind that the whole system of Christianity is true, yet a believing reception of it will furnish such degrees of confidence as an unbeliever can never attain: *we know him that is true—we are in him that is true—this is the true God and eternal life.*

For illustration and proof we call your attention,

1. To the *sobrieties* of Christianity. There is a differ-

ence between that state of mind which distinguishes worldly men in all their ordinary moods, and that which distinguishes believers. To say the least, believers are not so much actuated and agitated and driven about by worldly passions. The passions war against the soul. It is not possible that any human being should become a believer—should make his heart let go of the world—should *deny himself and take up his cross* to follow Jesus Christ, without coming into a different mental condition, into a state of mind more favorable for the investigation of truth.

There are two disadvantages under which an unbeliever labors in respect to the discovery of truth and confidence in it, (I speak of *religious* truth,) over which a believer hath obtained at least a partial victory.

The first disadvantage is, that the emotions of mind that distinguish an unbeliever are unfavorable to the *operations of mind* itself. He is agitated. Sinful passions are ordinarily very agitating. Pride is agitating; it flings the mind into confusion. Ambition is agitating; it flings the mind off its balance. Pleasure is agitating. Anger, envy, covetousness, loose desires, are agitating. Propose the subject of religion to a man who is under such influences, and he cannot fitly attend to its truth. His mind is disqualified for it,—under the influence of passion too much and of reason too little. Passion will warp his judgment, and the biases his judgment receives will be unfavorable to the cool processes of examination and the solidity of conviction.

The second disadvantage is, that an unbeliever, under the influences of these worldly passions, is in no situation to give his mind to the proofs of the truth. Even when he would examine them, his attention is called off

his thoughts are distracted. The world he has pursued so fondly and so long, now pursues him. Even in his most sober hours, when he would weigh the reasons which, we maintain, ought to determine him in favor of religion, he finds it an extremely difficult thing to keep the subject before his mind long enough to know what is true. His thoughts are easily distracted. This is a disadvantage.

Now, a believer has gained some triumph over both of these disadvantages. A believer is a man who hath subjected passion to reason. A believer is a man who hath learned to put a high and sacred value upon truth. A believer is a man who hath become aware of the deceitfulness of the heart, and hath seen the necessity of guarding himself against the subtle insinuations of the world. The sobrieties of religion have put him in a more fit frame for discovering the truth, and discerning clearly the evidences which establish it. With him the whole matter is a very serious matter, calculated at once to hush the clamor and commotion of the passions, and to confine his thoughts to itself alone. With him it is a serious thing to live; it is a serious thing to die; it is a serious thing to be a sinner, spared in this *space for repentance* for a little while, and not knowing at what moment his Lord shall say unto him, *Give an account of thy stewardship.* It is no wonder, therefore, that his mind gains a more fixed confidence in the truth, a more full, calm, stable, and comfortable confidence, so that he can begin to say, *We know that we are of God. We know that the Son of God hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is* TRUE, *and we are in him that is* TRUE—*this is the* TRUE *God.*

We could wish that this consideration were maturely contemplated by unconverted men. It explains *why* they remain irreligious. In their hearts the love of the world has never been suspended long enough to leave them to the power of the sobrieties of religion. Religious truth has been excluded from their mind, or at least has been contemplated only in half-distracted thoughts, and amid the agitation of passion. Such men are very prone to overlook an important thing. They forget that truth, religious truth, when it assails their mind, has not a fair chance. It is not a mere contest of truth against error, proof against proof. It is not merely that evidence is opposed to evidence, argument to argument, considerations in favor of religion opposed to considerations against it. If this were the whole case, the victory of religious truth would be easy. But it is that these opposing influences assail a mind that is occupied and distracted, and a heart that is biased. The heart is all in favor of one side, the side of indulgence and irreligion; and therefore it is no wonder that the power of truth gives way in such a soul before the feebleness of falsehood and error. Had these men the sobrieties which belong to the subject, they would soon *know him that is true*, and seek to be *in him that is true*. The sobrieties of religion secure a kind and degree of knowledge of truth such as an irreligious man cannot have. This is one reason for the increased and strong *confidence* expressed in the text.

2. The confidence expressed in the text so emphatically arises also somewhat from the fact that believers have brought *different faculties* to the ascertainment of truth. You know some truths may be known in different ways. We are not always confined to the same

method. I may know something about England, *e. g.*, by the testimony of those who have been there, by reading credible history, and by conversation with intelligent and truthful men. This is one way in which I may know (and the idea of the cavilling sceptic, who tells me that I can know nothing with certainty and security, because I have not been there to see with my own eyes, is too contemptible to deserve any answer;) I may know also by going into the country myself, and examining whatever comes before the eyes of a traveller. It is the same with much of religious truth. It may be known in different ways. And since it may be, it certainly is no strange thing that some men should have their confidence increased, because they have taken more than one way to learn what the truth is; because they have a double evidence—two ways to demonstrate the same thing.

Now, a believer is a man who has applied different faculties to the matter of religion, and he *knows* what is true by such *sort of evidence* as an unbeliever little uses. For example, I mention conscience. Conscience is that faculty of judgment by which we form an opinion on matters of right and wrong, connected with a sense of pain and self-condemnation when we have done wrong, and with a happiness, coming from self-approval, when we have done right. This is a faculty—one of the powers of the human soul. A believer employs it. He *uses* his conscience; and it is just as conceivable that *thereby* he may *know* truth better, as it is that he may know it better by using his eyes—by going into England after he has read about it, and looking around for himself. A believer uses his conscience—the internal eyes of his soul. He brings the truths of Christ

inward upon his conscience, where the Holy Ghost would carry them. At every step conscience confirms to him the proclaimed truths of Christianity. While he uses his conscience, and the Bible gives him lessons about himself, he asks, *Am* I such a sinner as this Bible tells me? Conscience answers, You are just such a sinner! He asks again, Am I so estranged from my God? Conscience answers, You are just so estranged. Again he inquires, Am I such a weak creature that my solemn purposes easily give way before the force of temptation, so that I cannot do the good that I would? Conscience answers, You are just that weak creature! He inquires again, Am I so guilty, so helpless too, that no righteousness of my own can ever fit me to meet my God in the disclosures of a coming judgment? Conscience replies, You are just that guilty, helpless creature! Half in despair, but with a little faith, the sinner turns to the offered blood of atonement, and asks himself, Am I safe here? is this sufficient to save my guilty soul from the damnation of hell? Conscience replies, It is enough—you need no more—you have *peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: . . . who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died.* Thus, as a believer employs his faculty of conscience, he learns to *know him that is* TRUE. His confidence is increased at every step. By his own internal powers, as if by his own eyes, he is enabled to say, *I know him that is true—this is the true God.* Other faculties also lead to the same thing.

3. This confidence in the truth is still further increased by the general application of it, whereby a believer is convinced of the truth by the evidence of its universal appropriateness.

The Christian religion is practical. Its field is all

life, and its demand is all the heart. As a Christian employs the guidance of his religion, more and more its excellencies are disclosed to him, more and more he *knows* it tells him the truth. It tells him indeed some strange things, some things which he is slow to learn. It tells him to *forgive his enemies;* if they are *hungry*, to *feed* them; if they are *naked*, to *clothe* them. It tells him to be content, humble, peaceful, kind, gentle, generous, not only to the good but to the evil, because God *sendeth the rain upon the just and upon the unjust.* A man, any common man, with the ordinary views and feelings of our simple humanity, is exceedingly prone to call into question, at first, the appropriateness of many of these directions. He does not think they are suitable to his life in such a cross-grained world as this, nor suitable for his heart among so many things which oppose the happiness he longs for. But when he tries them in faith, when he first *gives his own self unto the Lord* and then attempts in full sincerity to obey him, he learns to *know* that the divine directions are faithful and *true;* because, in every instance, to the heart within him and the world without him they are fully and without any exception appropriate. He never forgave an enemy but he was glad of it; he never extinguished a resentment, nor pocketed an insult, nor submitted to a reverse in fortune, nor exercised patience on the bed of pain, but he was glad of it afterwards, if not at the time. As far as he has found grace to *try* this Christianity, he has found it true. He knows it is true,—he knows it is true, because he knows it is appropriate.

I here abandon the plan of this sermon: I cannot condense my materials within the time your patience

allows me. For the rest, I group many items together under

4. *A whole chapter of Christian experiences.* These experiences increase and confirm a believer's confidence in Christianity, so that he can begin to express himself as St. John does in the text.

The recalling of such experiences appears appropriate to a day of communion. Why are you a communicant?

The heart of one of you will answer, 'I remember the time when I was not a communicant. I was a wild, worldly young man. The smiles of the world attracted me, entranced me; I forgot God, forgot duty, forgot the grave. I was hurrying on in my worldliness, exposed to dissipation, pleasure, sinful passions, and sinful companions. And though I had run a long career in my prayerless life, yet an adorable grace arrested me. I was convinced of my sin. I saw my feet were standing on *slippery places!* I knew I was a stranger to God, a far-off wanderer, an unworthy prodigal! It is a thousand wonders that God did not let me go, but he did not; he sent to me his Spirit, he humbled me, reformed me, accepted me in his Son. And now I am a communicant *because I know him that is true.* I *know* that nothing in my heart, nothing save the Holy Spirit, would have inclined me to seek God; no other power could have snatched me from the jaws of destruction. *I am in him that is true, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*'

Why are you a communicant? Another of you will answer, 'A while ago I was a wild, giddy girl. I loved pleasure, and pleasure entranced me. Ostentation, pride, vanity, led me on in a strange course. I did not love my God—I did not love prayer—I seldom thought of Christ and my whole heart led me to think of the

world as pleasant, and of religion as gloom. But I have learned better. By an infinite and adorable grace I have been led to see the vanity of the world. I have given it up. I have chosen a *better portion;* and now I *know* that Christianity is *true*, because I feel within me that it links me to my God, and lifts me toward my true felicity in his love and likeness. I would not go back to the world and its deceits and snares, for ten thousand such worlds.'

Some of you will remember your days of deliverance. You were in trials. You were bound in *affliction and iron.* Wave after wave swept over you. Satan tempted you. Your own heart turned against you. Friends forsook you, or failed you. Despair got hold upon you; and you saw yourself approaching a fathomless abyss, dark and dreadful as your own soul. 'Oh! if infinite power from on high had not aided me, and hemmed in Satan, and helped me out of his snares, and assisted my poor endeavors, I should have gone down hopeless under the burden of trials. God aided me; I *know* he aided me. It was *he* who first put strength into my poor heart, and taught me to bear, and taught me to hope, and baffled Satan, and helped me to keep my resolutions. I *know* that Christianity is *true*, for I have proved it — proved it in the boldest and best recollected experiences my nature ever had. God has positively been to me, since I turned to him in Christ, all that he ever promised me. I have tried him in dark days,—on the bed of pain,—over the coffins of my kindred,—amid the *fiery darts* that Satan hurled at me; and shall I not remember him at his Table, and sum up my account of gratitude while I hold the Cup of blessing to unworthy lips?'

Another communicant will remember his supports and deliverances, as *answers to prayer.* No matter of what sort they were. Perhaps he was tempted, and he cried mightily unto God, and God heard him and sent him relief. Perhaps he was called to a duty to which he was unequal—he knew that he was unequal to it, just as in this ministry we have uttered the expression a thousand times with bitter tears, *Who is sufficient for these things?* but when he called on God and would not give back from duty, but would sooner meet death, God helped him, in every instance he helped him: the morning was dark, the noonday was dark and dreadful with storms, but *it came to pass that at evening-time it was light.* Prayer was answered, and he knows it was answered, and he knows God is *true*, and *he is in him that is true.*

You may fill out the chapter for yourselves; only recollect the principle, that a Christian's experiences constitute a demonstration of the truth of religion, and give him the more confidence the further they extend. Religion deals with his heart, his habits, his whole soul, his ways on earth, and his hopes as they reach beyond it. Consequently, by the capabilities and faculties of his own nature, his wants, his fears, the demands of his conscience, and the darkness of his grace, he knows that religion is true. Nothing else can meet his necessities. This does. He feels it does: he knows it does. He has tried it and found it *true.* Jesus Christ has met all his wants hitherto,—his wants as a sinner, his wants under the law, the wants of his conscience, his weakness, his fears, his heart,—and he can therefore trust him for the rest—for his bed of death, his grave, and his heaven. On this principle it is that St. John adds

the final clause of the text, *This is the true God, and eternal life.* Jesus Christ, *true* to him so long, tried and found *true*, will be *true* to him for ever. He has promised him *eternal life*, and he will give it.

With this confidence, this glorious confidence in Christ, unshaken and consoling, aim, O communicant! to approach his covenant-table. You enter into a covenant which shall never be broken. You give yourself to a Lord who will never abandon you. You become *his*, bought with his blood, and *none shall be able to pluck you out of his hands.* Receive him! as a lost sinner, rescued from going down to hell by his mediatorial work, receive him! and he will be unto you all that your soul can want. He will hush your fears. He will be your strength. He will show you his own grace, which shall sanctify yours. He will remind you of his death, which shall make your own precious in the sight of God. He will show your believing soul that *house of many mansions*, your *own* because *his.* He will enable you, with equal happiness and humility, as you lift the solemn sacramental Cup, to exclaim, *We know that we are of God. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.* You will drink it. May you be able to do so with this text upon your lips! May the heavens be opened, and the Spirit descend upon you, waking in your happy soul the song,

> "Perish every fond ambition,
> All I've sought, or loved, or known;
> Yet how blest is my condition,
> Christ and heaven are still my own."

XXVI.

Jesus Christ's Parting Address.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—JOHN xiv. 27.

IN the biography of Jesus Christ, nothing is more manifest than his tender compassion. He came into our world on an errand of mercy, and all his ministry here was in consistency with the object of his high mission. At the time he uttered the words of our text he had just risen from the sacramental table, where he had made prophetic distribution of the emblems of his body and blood. What a time for pronouncing a farewell address! What an occasion for preaching a sacramental sermon! Around him is the little band of disciples who have waited on his ministry, who have followed his steps, who have been partakers in his joys and his sorrows, have trusted in his guidance, and hoped he would lead them to heaven! But he is going to leave them. He has risen from the last Supper, and never again will their eyes behold him at the social table or the sacramental board. Henceforth his seat must be vacant! His loved disciples shall indeed meet,

but Jesus Christ will not be there!—he will be beyond death, and in heaven!

He looks back upon the years of his ministry, and now, when they have come to a close, what a small number he beholds gathered in pious affection at this his farewell, his funeral feast! How his soul must have centred upon that loved, that little band! He looks forward to the future, and pain, ignominy, agony, the desertion of earth and the abandonment of heaven, await him. To-morrow he must die. All that is dreadful in dying, enhanced by all that is terrible in bearing the wrath of God for sinners, is before him.

But even here Jesus Christ loses none of his tender regard for his followers, and while entering upon the horrors of the last conflict, he forgets himself, and fills up the hour of parting with ideas consolatory to those who will soon mourn his death. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

Two general ideas are suggested by these words, and the circumstances in which they were uttered, and we will not ask you to wander beyond them while we attempt to lead your devotions in the solemnities of this hour.

I. The first is, that the disciples of Jesus Christ were going to be placed in circumstances calculated to make their hearts *troubled and fearful.*

II. The second is, that Jesus Christ speaks tenderly to them, and would cheer and assure their hearts before he leaves them.

Assembled this morning, believers in Christ, to commemorate the death of your Master, open your hearts

to the sentiments of his dying discourse! We are going to set before you some of the things which have made pious hearts fearful, and may again do so. But we are not going to *leave you comfortless.* Though you must behold hope disarmed, faith staggered, fear triumphing over courage, the infant church in mourning, and the heart-stricken believer just ready to despair and die, still we are going to lead you to climb Mount Calvary and mingle your tears with the blood of the blessed Jesus.

I. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* The disciples of Jesus Christ were about to be placed in circumstances calculated to trouble and terrify them.

1. Their friend was going to leave them. Imperfect as may have been their understanding of the prophecies concerning his death, still they must have already known enough of their significance to know that he was about to leave them. He had said, *Little children, yet a little while I am with you: ye shall seek me and . . . whither I go, ye cannot come. I go to prepare a place for you.* The sadness of their anticipated bereavement was settling down upon their hearts. They were listening to their beloved friend for the last time, and he adapts his words to the fearful forebodings of their bosoms.

Jesus Christ was a man. He was God; but human nature being united with the divine nature, he possessed all the feelings essential to humanity. As a man, he was the friend and companion of his associates, and their hearts learned to lean upon and requite his love. His affection is spoken of as the affection of friend and brother. *The disciple whom Jesus loved* is the description of one of his followers. *Now, Jesus loved Martha,*

and her sister, and Lazarus. In the loss of Jesus Christ, therefore, his disciples experienced the rupture of those tender ties which bind heart to heart, the loss of that friendly society and sympathy which contribute so much to alleviate life's sorrows and lighten its burdens.

Let us retain those loved ones round whom our affections gather, and we can bear many a trial. The reverses and disappointments we meet with will find their solace in the society of those we love. Who has not felt, when pressed down with care, afflicted, agitated, that there was a sustaining, renewing spirit diffused around that little spot called *home?* Whose heart has not felt its despondency melt away when, driven by the unfeeling selfishness of a cold world, he takes refuge in his *home*,—that little emblem of heaven? The soothing of those we love sustains us under misfortune. Spare me those I love, that little circle round which my heart clings, and I can bear trial; distresses will not overwhelm me, and outward disappointment will only serve to brighten the felicities of domestic affection.

But the disciples were about to lose their best friend. Jesus Christ was going to die. They must encounter trials, endure afflictions, be overwhelmed with labor and disappointment, and no friendly, fraternal Jesus to soothe them in their sorrows!

They were about to lose more than this; they must part with their spiritual teacher and guide. Jesus Christ was a faithful minister; he preached repentance and faith, and pointed the contrite sinner to a forgiving God. But his ministry is now closed; *The Shepherd must be smitten, and the sheep shall be scattered.*

This world, my hearers, is a very little thing; and when only its afflictions press upon us, they may be en-

dured. *Outward affliction which is but for a moment* may be forgotten, may be triumphed over, when we have some one to point us upward and lead us onward to *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* The presence of a faithful minister does much to lighten misfortune. There is something dear in sighing our sorrows and distresses into the bosom of a man of God. To be guided by counsels that take hold on eternity, to have our affections tempered with the advice of piety and lifted away to those *things which are above*, to have the friend of another world stand by us when this world's friends have fled, gives us a kind of victory over affliction, and enables us even to triumph when we fall.

But the disciples were going to lose their minister. The infant church must be clothed in sackcloth. When prejudice and malignity are arrayed against it, when the rod of persecution is lifted and its members are *scattered and peeled*, no living counsellor shall unite its energies and console the sinking spirits of its members. The storm shall thicken around them, it shall burst upon them,—wave after wave in wild commotion shall roll over them,—and no steady helmsman enable them to ride out the storm, faithfully guiding them to a haven of rest. The individual disciple must be tried, tempted, perplexed; doubt, discouragement, despondency must come over him; and, amid all this, no compassionate Jesus shall be with him. The contrite sinner shall weep; but no Saviour shall reply, *Be of good cheer! thy sins are forgiven thee.*

3. The expectations of the disciples were to be disappointed. The mysteries of redemption were but imperfectly understood by the family of Christ. His disciples evidently expected something different from what

they realized. When he told them *how he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed*, Peter could not bear the anticipation: *Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.* Perhaps before *this* period the disciples had learned to expect his death. But we find that, even after his resurrection, they looked for the establishment of some temporal dominion. When he *showed himself alive after his passion, they asked him, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*

It is sad to have our cherished expectations blasted. We can better bear our misfortunes and trials if they have been expected and prepared for. But when we have looked forward to some expected good, disappointment sinks us lower than if no expectation had been cherished.

So it was with the disciples. Expectation was looking to see the Messiah swaying the sceptre, wearing an earthly diadem, and robed in purple. But his followers are forced to see him arrested as a culprit; it is *mockery* that arrays him in purple, and cruelty crowns him with thorns. The buoyancy of expectation gives place to the sadness of despair, and well may their hearts be *troubled* and *fearful.*

4. And finally, (to embrace all things in one,) the faith of the disciples in Jesus Christ as the Messiah was to be greatly shaken.

Our ideas of the crucifixion are very different from those of the primitive disciples. We have grown up with sentiments of veneration for the Cross. From our cradle we have been accustomed to associate a high and holy dignity with the crucifixion of Christ. But with the disciples it was not so. Crucifixion was the most

disgraceful of all deaths. Only the vilest culprits and slaves were thus executed. What, then, must have been the distrust of his followers when they saw Jesus Christ, that man on whom their hearts rested, on whom their hopes fastened, in whose counsels they trusted, and whom they had regarded as worthy of all adoration,—when they saw him arrested as a vile felon, tried, condemned, and hung upon a tree. Would not their faith be shaken? Could they still confide in his promises when they saw him, bleeding and dying, in the hands of his executioners. Their faith *was* shaken. *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.* Thus they spake after his crucifixion. *We trusted it had been he:* they *once* had faith, but now their heart was *troubled* and *fearful.*

It may be questioned whether there is a Christian on earth whose faith would not have been staggered, had he been placed in the situation of the disciples immediately after the crucifixion. The prophecies of the Messiah were but imperfectly understood. The method in which the Christian dispensation was to be introduced seems to have been utterly misapprehended. Jesus Christ dies in ignominy, hung up between heaven and earth, as if unworthy of either. How naturally the mind of the disciple would inquire, Had this been the Messiah, whose *dominion is to extend from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,* would he have come to such an end as this? Where was his *rod of iron, to break the nations and dash them in pieces,* when he was dragged from one court to another, insulted, scourged, and hung upon the Cross? Had he been the great hope of Israel, would he have left such darkness

to come on Israel's prospects? If he had loved us, would he have left us in such troublous circumstances as these, if he *had been* the mighty Messiah? Alas! we hoped that, by authority, he had forgiven our sins; that he would never *leave us nor forsake us;* that we had found the Lord's anointed, who would guide us through life, give us the victory over death and hell, and bring us to heaven! But he has left us, and we are *troubled* and distressed.

There is nothing which so clouds the soul of the Christian as this shaken, staggered faith. It is like drying up the streams of mercy that roll from beneath the throne of God. It is like shutting up the heavens, covering them with blackness and gloom. For though mercy still flows as freely, *faith*, the channel of its communication to the sinner's soul, is gone; and though the heavens are still all luminous with the beams of salvation, *faith*, the eye that sees it, is extinguished! Give me unshaken faith in my Saviour, let me be assured he loves me, and then let afflictions thicken, *I can endure, seeing him who is invisible;* let this body crumble, there is *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* let friends forsake me, let foes accuse, let this *earth be burned up*, and these heavens *be rolled together as a scroll*, let creation sink—still, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and forever. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* But the sustaining power of faith was about to be wanting to the disciples—their hearts would be *troubled* and *afraid.*

II. But Jesus speaks comfortably to them, and would assure their hearts. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* The

object of his farewell address was to furnish his disciples with resources under trial and affliction.

Let us look into this address, therefore, and see what sources of consolation and support he opens to them. I cannot name to you all.

1. In the thirty-fourth verse of the thirteenth chapter we find the first source of consolation opened to them: *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* It is very remarkable that never, until this hour of Jesus Christ's parting with his disciples, had such a command been given. All men were indeed previously commanded to love one another, but never till now were Christians ordered to love one another *because* they were Christians. This is *a new commandment*, and it drops from the lips of Jesus Christ just as he takes leave of his beloved.

A pastor must sometimes part from the flock he has fed. Death will surely call him away. He must leave those over whom his heart yearns, with whose tears he has mingled his own, and whose joys have always served to heighten his. They can no longer sigh their griefs into his bosom, nor he be permitted to tell them of a good, forgiving God! On such an occasion all the dangers to which they will be exposed rush upon his mind. Some of them are young and feeble,—some of them are exposed and tempted,—some weak, some wavering, some agitated and distressed. And what on such an occasion shall he say to them; what source of consolation and security shall he open to them more important than this first article in the counsel of Christ? *A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

There is no little security in this reciprocal affection. It defends against dangers, guards from temptation, disarms affliction and disappointment, secures the weak, and increases the strength of the strong. How earnestly you would desire that those in whom you feel interested should *love one another* if you were about to leave them. Tell me, ye fathers, ye mothers, whose hearts fondly hang around your children, if you were stretched upon the bed of death, what would ye say to them? As the thoughts of their orphanage pressed upon you—as you gave them, with cold hand, the last parting grasp—would you not say, When I am dead, *love one another?* If you would have *peace*, the *peace* which Jesus Christ gives—if you would not have your heart *troubled* and *afraid*, *love one another*. No matter what your dangers or distresses, this is the refuge, this is the first source of peace that Jesus Christ opens to you.

2. You may find the second in the second verse of the fourteenth chapter: *I go to prepare a place for you.* Though Jesus Christ was about to leave his followers, he was not about to forget them. His departure hence was necessary in the economy of redemption; and his business in the other world, where *he ever liveth to make intercession*, is to prepare for the admission of the redeemed into heaven. Remember, then, in your trials, that Jesus Christ never forgets the interest of the believer. He went away, but he went in love. It is sometimes necessary that friends should part. Duty will often do violence to spontaneous emotions, but separation of persons need not be disunion of hearts. Believe, then, in the constancy of Christ's love. If you are his disciple, he is still mindful of you, and is preparing for your reception into heaven.

3. There is a third source of consolation, and you may find it in the third verse of this chapter: *If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* It was not for his own sake that Jesus Christ departed out of the world by a death of agony and shame. All his trials and sufferings were for us. *He was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification.* And he will not fail to perfect what he has begun. *In my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Mourning pilgrim! your sorrows are but for a moment. Lift your eyes to heaven. Jesus Christ has satisfied for you the holy justice of God, and he will *come and receive you to himself.* In this life you *shall have tribulation*, but with Jesus Christ you shall have rest in heaven. If you would not have your heart *troubled* and fearful, let its affections fasten upon *those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.* What is there in the afflictions of this world that need trouble you, if your faith can anticipate heaven? A little time shall end every earthly trial. Are you *ready* to enter heaven? Do you feel, believer in Christ, that you *would* be freed from sin—would be like God—that you could hail the coming of Jesus Christ to *receive you to himself?* I fear that many of us have little consolation from looking to our Saviour's coming. I do fear that many of us who *eat and drink* in Christ's presence have so little love, so little faith, so little conformity to Christ, that we are unable to gain anything of joy from the thought of our

translation to another world. *I will come and receive you to myself* is an expression that I do fear rather terrifies than cheers the heart of many a communicant.

What shall be done? This fountain of consolation, by reason of our sins, is in vain.

4. Blessed be God, there is another. You may find it opened in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of this chapter, and again in the twenty-fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.... If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* Prayer, then, is the resource. In all your distresses, call upon God. Are you deprived of friends, of ministers—are you afflicted, desponding, doubting—is your faith shaken, your soul dark, your sins numerous, your conscience troubled, your death coming, and your Saviour hidden from your view—prostrate yourself before the Eternal, and pour your entreaties into the bosom of your compassionate God. Desponding sinners! be not distressed. Look up into heaven. Jesus Christ is there, all scarred and wounded, and you may ask forgiveness in his name. Only repent of sin and believe in Christ, and your prayers will be heard. *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

Then, mourning penitent, *be of good cheer.* Your sorrows shall be turned into joy. *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

Never forget this resource. Prayer unlocks heaven. It is the voice of childhood lifted up to an eternal Father. Your earthly parents and friends may fail, may die. But God lives. *Ask, and ye shall receive, that*

your joy may be full. Heaven shall open to your supplications. The petition made in the name of Christ will never be unavailing. Because

5. Your Saviour will unite his prayers with yours, and the Holy Ghost shall be given unto you. In the sixteenth verse of this fourteenth chapter, he opens this source of assurance. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.* Never imagine that you can do anything in religion without the Holy Ghost. As well might the corpse arise from its coldness, tear off its shroud, and go onward, unaided, in the vigor of life, as any sinner prosper in salvation without the aids of the Eternal Spirit. But the intercession of Christ, and prayer offered in the name of Christ, shall bring down the Eternal Spirit, the Holy Comforter, upon your hearts. You need not, then, despair of getting ready for heaven. Though buffeted with temptation, tried, finding sins *which easily beset you, and a law in your members warring against the law of your mind,* still there is a Holy Comforter, and he will abide with the penitent forever.

6. Finally, you may have communion with Christ. This is the last method of gaining peace which time allows us to mention. It is spoken of in the eighteenth verse. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.* The deity of Jesus Christ, and that alone, enables him to fulfil this promise. He does fulfil it. He consoles the penitent heart. He comes to cheer and sustain the sorrowing believer. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.*

These are some of the fountains of peace and consolation that Jesus Christ sets before you. If you have not

peace with God, surely it is not for want of appropriate direction from Christ.

And all these promises he seals with his blood. From this farewell meeting he goes forth to be betrayed, to be insulted, to bleed and die. Had it not been for his death, we could have spoken no peace to you. You might have sighed and wept away the years of a miserable existence, and ended the wretchedness of this life only in sinking beneath the eternal wrath of God.

But in the blood of Jesus Christ you have the pledge of all you need. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!* Go, then, for your consolation, to your precious, dying Saviour. Sinful, sorrowing, anxious, go, climb Mount Calvary, fasten your eyes upon its bleeding victim, and dry your tears by his Cross.

As you handle these emblems, call to mind the sins, and afflictions, and trials, and everything that tends to render you fearful and troubled; see what you are,—a poor helpless sinner, having no claim to comfort on earth or salvation in heaven. And then call to mind the counsels and atoning sacrifice of your Saviour! If you come to this ordinance, sorrowing for sin and trusting in the blood of Jesus, then *let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* True, affliction will come, but Jesus Christ will console you: true, trials will assail, but his *grace is sufficient for you:* true, you may lose your friends, but hear Jesus Christ! *Lazarus sleepeth . . . only believe*, and you shall *see the glory of God*. true, you are soon to lie down and die, but, *because he lives, ye shall live also . . . . Life or death, all things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

Annihilate yourself, therefore, as you come to this ordinance; be nothing, and let Jesus Christ be all. Pause, pray, surrender your whole selves to Christ, for time and eternity, or approach not the Table of the Lord. Give yourselves to Christ; and whatever your unworthiness, or sins, or fears, *let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* Christ will meet you, he will love you, he will save you.

Come, Lord Jesus! enter our hearts, and make us thine, and to thy name be the glory! AMEN.